





LIFE OF ST. MILDRED,

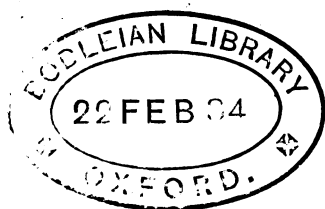
Abbess of Minster in Thanet.

BY
A LAY-TERTIARY OF ST. FRANCIS.



R. WASHBOURNE,
18 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.
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P R E F A C E .

THE following memoir of St. Mildred was undertaken at the request of the Benedictine nuns of Minster. Its author felt no slight embarrassment when he first glanced through the records of the Bollandists and other standard sources of information. For it became clear to him that the *facts* of St. Mildred's life, as handed down to us, were very few in number, and that even these were much entangled in the meshes of controversy.

The hope, however, of reviving in some measure the memory of a Saint,—whose name lives familiarly amongst us, though her fame has all but died away,—made the writer set

to work with a good will and an earnest determination to consult *in fonte* every reference he should find bearing upon her history. Most of these he diligently copied out, and thus at length amassed a good store of materials. The next step was to index the various details, and then, after weighing the many opinions on each point, to follow that which seemed most firmly established.

The result, it is true, may hardly warrant the pretentious title given to the book, but such a heading seemed the most simple, and for that reason it was adopted.

Should the reader be distracted by the numerous foot-notes to the text, he will bear more indulgently with them, when he reflects that they refer mostly to controverted points. It seemed to the writer a simpler process to give weighty authorities for the narrative adopted, than to be continually combating rival opinions. A few points, however, that

required clearing up (together with some details that would have hampered the text) have been dealt with in the Appendices.

While thus making a clean breast of his nineteenth century eclecticism, the author would fain borrow a little of the simplicity of the good old writers of Saints' lives. Their fulness of heart did certainly lead them oftentimes into the charm-land of legend, but this was, for the most part, only a natural effect of their pious and constant meditations; for they dwelt upon the Lives of Saints as a spiritual rather than an intellectual exercise. These old writers made it their first aim to seize upon the essentially beautiful, and often were less anxious about its accidental surroundings than we should be nowadays. And after all, no accidental error of time and of place can rob a poetical thought or holy act of its intrinsic beauty.

The conviction of the present writer is that

this short memoir of St. Mildred has lost in spiritual edification what it, perhaps, has gained in historical accuracy. Still he cherishes the hope that some will find in it at least one good and profitable thought, and then his work in St. Mildred's good cause will not have been altogether thrown away.

St. Clement's Day, 1883.

LIFE OF SAINT MILDRED.



CHAPTER I.

ST. MILDRED OF THANET—HER PARENTAGE.

‘Gaude virgo gloriosa
In Christi tui gloria,
Mildretha benignissima,
Proles regum clarissima,
Merciorum margarita,
Cantuariæ corona,
Totius Angliæ stella radians :
Fave cunctis prece pia!’
(*Ex MS. Harl. 3908.*)

No spot in England is more interesting to the lover of Christian lore than the Kentish Isle of Thanet. Here, of old, came Augustine and his Benedictine brethren, eager to evangelize England. Here, on the green sward, took place that memorable meeting with King Ethelbert, the description of which is at once so thrilling and so picturesque. Here again,

throughout the Saxon age, was the soil blessed by the footsteps of sainted kings and bishops, missionaries and pious pilgrims, on their way to that Apostolic See whence Augustine had derived his mission and authority.

In the very heart of this favoured island, by the banks of its winding river,¹ rose the walls of the abbey of the Virgin Mother. It was one of those early Saxon monasteries peopled by widowed queens, young princesses and maidens high and low—the first-fruits to God of a converted nation. The place has been known ever since as Minster. And certainly its most pleasing associations are even yet with the gentle memories of Queen Domneva, St. Mildred, St. Eadberg, and those virtuous as well as learned nuns who corresponded quite familiarly with St. Boniface in the Latin tongue.

Foremost amidst this pious throng stands St. Mildred, styled by Edward the Confessor as ‘the Virgin Mildred beloved of God,’² around whose memory so many poetic legends have gathered. Though more than a thousand years have passed since she held mild sway over the choir of nuns at Minster, her name is

¹ The Wantsume.

² Codex Diplom. Chart. 900.

still everywhere perpetuated in the Isle of Thanet. There is St. Mildred's Bay, St. Mildred's Lynch, St. Mildred's Road, St. Mildred's Abbey, aye, St. Mildred's Hotel.

'Thanet, as her Saint, even to this age doth hery'³
Her Mildred.'⁴

In other parts of Kent there are still four parish churches to her honour, viz., at Canterbury, Tenterden, Nurstead and Preston; while in London we find St. Mildred the Virgin's in Poultry, and St. Mildred's, Bread Street, besides the more mundane St. Mildred's Court: all this showing that our Saint was equally popular with the citizens of London as with her Kentish liege-men.

A fresh interest, however, has been given to the life of this Virgin-Abbess by the public celebration of her festival as in days of yore, by authority of the Holy See,⁵ and again by the recent translation of her remains from Deventer, in Holland, to her old home at Minster. There is a special interest, therefore, in gleaning the scattered and fragmentary

³ Cherish, venerate.

⁴ Michael Drayton's 'Poly-Olbion' (sixteenth century).

⁵ Sub ritu duplici in Insula Thanet, jussu Urbani VI. et Leonis XIII.

records of a Saint whose acts, in the language of the old Catholic dramatist, ⁶

‘Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.’

Mildred came of a holy and royal stock. Her father was Merwald, ruler of the western part of Mercia; her mother Ermenberga, the great-granddaughter of Ethelbert. Merwald was a convert to Christianity, full of zeal and ardour, while Ermenberga inherited all the virtuous traditions of her glorious ancestry. Their marriage took place about the year 655, and was blessed with three daughters and one son, ‘all of whom,’ says an old Saxon author, ⁷ ‘for love of God, bestowed within their lifetime all their goods upon the poor.’ The whole family have, in fact, been canonized by the voice of the people. Mildburg, Mildred and Mildgyth, the three daughters, are poetically likened to the cardinal virtues—Mildred shining in their midst as an embodiment of Love. Of the boy, Meresin, little is known, save that ‘he was led away to heaven in his youth.’ ⁸

⁶ James Shirley (sixteenth century).

⁷ Incertus Auctor Sax. de Sanctis in Anglia quiescent. ap. MS. Harl. 464 transcript., ex. Cod., *C. C. C. C.*, 284.

⁸ Cf. MS. Cott. Calig., A xiv. (Saxonice), ap. ‘Saxon Leechdoms,’ vol. iii., p. 425 (Rolls Series).

St. Mildred's father was the youngest son of the pagan warrior Penda, King of Mercia, who, though he had slain five Christian Kings in battle, was wont to despise such of his converted subjects as did not live up to their calling. 'For,' said he, 'they are despicable and mean who do not worship the God in whom they believe.'⁹ This bold descendant of Woden was the progenitor of a long line of Saints. And though he himself never became a Christian, yet all his children were alike conspicuous in their zeal for the faith.

The one of all King Penda's sons, concerning whom least is known, is precisely St. Mildred's father. The reason is plain. Merwald never ruled the whole of Mercia. His other brothers did. And consequently but little of his personal history has been handed down in the national annals.¹⁰ Still, the little that is known about him is highly honourable.

It would seem that he was already king (or

⁹ Bed. Hist. Eccl., iii. 21.

¹⁰ 'History,' says Kemble, 'knows little of the various reguli who within their petty territories exercised the regal power; and nearly as little of the extent and nature of the authority claimed or vindicated by the sons and brothers of ruling sovereigns.'—Cod. Dipl. Intro., p. 13.

better, perhaps, *regulus*) of that part of Mercia which bordered on the Welsh country, when Etfrid, a Northumbrian priest, brought the good tidings of the Gospel to his people. Merwald was easily won over to the cause of Christ. So much so, indeed, that the old legend of a lion gently taking bread from St. Etfrid's hand, has been interpreted of the King accepting the Bread of Life from the Saint.¹¹

This event must have happened before 657, for the Anglo-Saxon chronicle speaks of Merwald, in that year, as counselling his brother, King Wulphere, in the endowment of Medeshamstede, so famous in medieval times as the Abbey of Peterboro'.

Merwald was himself a most liberal benefactor of the Church. The monasteries of Leominster and Wenlock, founded and endowed by him, flourished down to the day when England changed her religion. His venerable remains reposed within those two houses of prayer—his head at Leominster, and his body at Wenlock.¹² According to the Bollandists, he

¹¹ Cf. Legend. S. Etfridi, ap. MS. Harl. 2253 ; necnon Monast. Anglic., artic. Leominstr.

¹² Monast. Anglic. loc. cit.

also founded the See of Hereford.¹³ Others add that he took leave of his wife after some years of wedded life, that she might be free to preside over the monastery of Minster; and Florence of Worcester does not hesitate to style him Saint.¹⁴ We may infer something of his kindly and humane disposition from the word *mild* (gentle and clement), prefixed by him to his three daughters' names. Mildred thus signifies 'the peaceful well.'¹⁵

. In turning to St. Mildred's ancestry on her mother's side, a brilliant galaxy of Saints unfolds itself before us. For Ermenberga, her mother, was not only descended from Ethelbert, the first Christian King of England, but likewise from Clovis, the first Christian King of France. To scan their heavenly features, however hastily, would far outstrip the limits we have fixed. But we must not entirely overlook the grand monastic movement, chiefly set on foot by them in

¹³ Bolland. in Vit. S. Mildburgæ V.

¹⁴ Wigorn. in Geneal. Reg. Mercior.

¹⁵ Mildred is really Mildrith (Mildpið), the Saxon ð having been modified into *d*. Mildrith, 'the placid well or fount,' is analogous to Ethelburh, 'the noble city,' whence Ethelberga, Eadberga, and Edburg.

England, in which they (and St. Mildred notably) took so prominent a part.

England, when St. Augustine landed on its friendly shores, was essentially pagan—pagan in heart, in mind, and in worship. The Britons, whom the hardy northmen had driven into the mountains of the far west, were Christians. Christianity, therefore, to the rude Saxon warrior, was the religion of his vanquished foe, whom he heartily and most unjustly despised. So deeply, in fact, was this contemptuous feeling rooted in the national temper, that it might well seem, humanly speaking, impossible for England ever to have been converted, had not the leaders of the nation themselves taken the task in hand.¹⁶

This they did with wonderful energy ; and if it should be urged that they were not all guiltless men, that very circumstance does but prove the marvellous influence of the grace of God. ‘Saxon England,’ says Cardinal Manning, ‘with all its tumults, seems to me saintly and beautiful.’ And why? Because the Almighty worked wonders in those days—supernatural wonders in the hearts of men—

¹⁶ See Montalembert’s ‘*Moines d’Occident*,’ tome v.

that remind us of the effusion of grace in the first ages of the Church, when not only the lame were made to walk and the blind to see, but even an Afra could be suddenly moved by the Holy Spirit to witness to the Truth, and die a martyr's death.

Yes, there must be martyrs to the religion of Christ, at all times, and at all costs. Some testify by their blood ; others by word ; others again by example. St. Mildred's illustrious kindred witnessed chiefly in the last of these ways. Their mission was a most exalted one : to give up all things on earth, to withdraw to the silent cloister, and there to pray for the conversion of their people, there to preach the abnegation of the Cross, by the resistless force of heroic example. For, as the poet says :

‘ The silence often of pure innocence
Persuades when speaking fails.’

Among St. Mildred's kindred in this goodly company are the Kings Ethelred and Kenred of Mercia, Ceolwulf and Eadbert of Northumbria ; then come the queenly Abbesses Ethelburga, Ermenhilda, Sexburga, Kinneburga ; and lastly a whole host of maiden princesses, among whom SS. Ethelreda, Eans-

witha, Earcongotha, Wereburga, Kinneswitha, Ermengytha, and our Saint's own sisters, Mildburg and Mildgyth.

'How beautiful your presence, how benign,
Servants of God, who not a thought will share
With the vain world, who outwardly as bare
As winter trees, yield no fallacious sign
'That the firm soul is clothed with fruit divine!'¹⁷

The Scriptures tell us that there are some devils that cannot be driven out save by fasting and prayer. The spirit of paganism is one of these; and just as the great St. Anthony had the mission of expelling Satan from his last stronghold in the desert,¹⁸ so these early Saxon recluses, in their Benedictine homes, fought the Evil One with the surest weapons of Christian warfare.

What wonder, then, that those who had thus devoted their lives to so grand and noble a work, should have been blessed by a grateful posterity, and numbered among the Saints of God!

¹⁷ Wordsworth's 'Sonnet to the Saxon Clergy.'

¹⁸ See Cardinal Newman's 'St. Antony in Conflict.'

CHAPTER II.

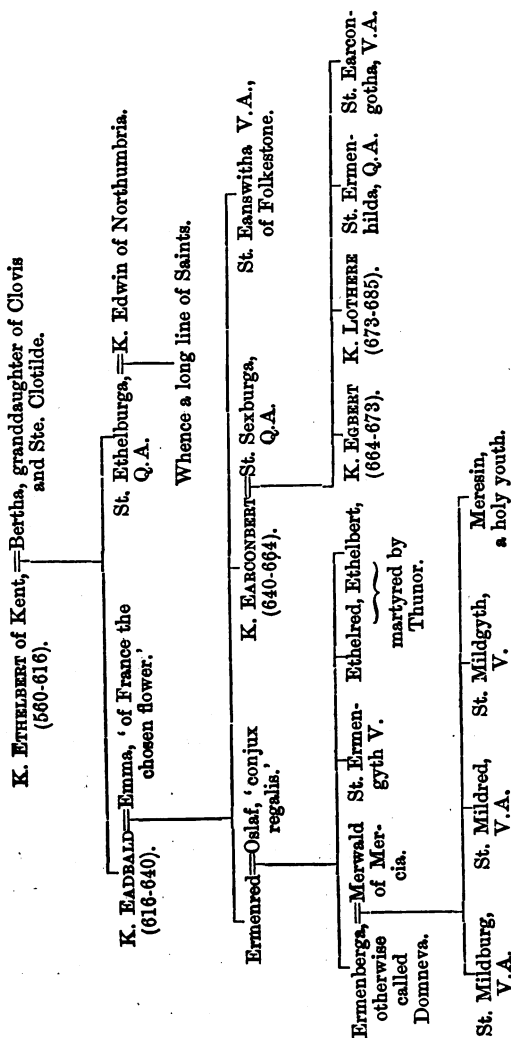
THUNOR'S CRIME.

ST. MILDRED was born about the year 660,¹ not in Kent, as some might suppose, but on the Welsh border-land beyond the Severn, where her father held his sway. It was there that she spent the days of her childhood ; and there she would probably have lived and died, had not a tragic event happened in her family, which determined the whole course of her future life. This mournful episode was the murder of her mother's two brothers, Ethelred and Ethelbert, Princes of Kent. Its author was one Thunor, a courtier of King Egbert, who thought thereby to ingratiate himself with his sovereign.

No writer of St. Mildred's history has ever passed over this dark record in silence ; and briefly it runs as follows.

King Eadbald of Kent, at his death in 640,

¹ See Appendix A.



left two sons, Ermenred and Earconbert. But the younger, Earconbert, overreached his brother, and craftily deprived him of his birthright.²

Earconbert died in 664, and was succeeded by his son Egbert, who brought up at court his uncle Ermenred's two sons. These youths, Ethelred and Ethelbert by name, led a life of unspotted innocence. Now, in the house of this King Egbert was a certain courtier, 'a limb of the devil,'³ whose name was Thunor, which signifies Thunder. This man envied and hated the two saintly youths, and laboured assiduously to blacken their innocence in the King's mind.

'I see, O King,' he said, 'that thou art carefully bringing up those who will one day grow bold and take thy kingdom from thee. Therefore I should think it expedient for thee to banish them to some distant country, or else to hand them over to me to be put out of the way.'⁴

The King was so lukewarm in his reproof

² The account here given follows that of the Saxon records that have come down to us. It differs materially from that of the Norman Canterbury chroniclers and their copyists (see Appendix C.). Durham, Wendover, Cirencester, and Westminster are in accord with the Saxon authors.

³ 'Diaboli membrum.'—Rog. Wend. Flor. Hist., An. 654.

⁴ Ibid.

of these evil suggestions that Thunor one night, without the King's knowledge, murdered the saintly youths, and shamelessly buried their bodies under the royal throne, at Eastry, near Sandwich. 'He supposed,' says a Saxon writer,⁵ 'that they would never reappear, but by the power of God they were made known, for a beam of light stood up through the roof of the hall up to heaven.' The king himself, on going out about the first cock-crowing, saw the wonder, and was terrified. Suspicious of foul play, he summoned Thunor before him, bidding him confess if he had done wrong to the young Princes. Thunor at first was loth to speak ; and when he at length did so, it was with barefaced villainy that he recounted the hateful deed.

Egbert was conscience-stricken. He felt the guilt of the crime upon his soul ; and next day calling his councillors and thanes together, he laid the matter before them, saying how he desired to make all possible amends.

'He then, with the support of Theodore,⁶

⁵ Auct. Sax. jam cit. vide, 'Saxon Leechdoms,' vol. iii., p. 425 (Rolls Series).

⁶ The Saxon MS. has Deusdedit ; but this is clearly a mistake, as St. Deusdedit died on the very day that Egbert became King (see Appendix C, § 3).

the Archbishop, arranged that an order should be issued to fetch their sister (Ermenberga) out of Mercia (into which she had been given in marriage), that she should choose her brothers' wergild, or compensation to the relatives, of such things as seemed good to herself and to her nearest friends.⁷

Now Ermenberga, at this period, had a family of four children; and it is reasonable to suppose that she took her three daughters, Mildburg, Mildred, and Mildgyth, with her in this sad journey from the west of England to the capital of Kent, a journey at once long and tedious in those days.

Ermenberga's heart was sad indeed as she neared her native Kent. Those green sloping uplands, those dense, majestic forests, those plains and vales so rudely tilled, and yet so fruitful, the buoyant air, fresh wafted from the sea, and the gay sunlight of her old homeland, all called back the bright memories of girlhood, over which the ruthless hand of Time had cast a pall for ever. Perchance as she glided under the shadow of SS. Peter and Paul's great monastery,⁸ where the

⁷ MS. Sax. *supr. cit.*

⁸ Later on the famous St. Augustine's.

remains of her royal forefathers were all entombed, the thought of the hollowness of earthly pomp sank deeply in her heart. She had loved her young brothers, who had been pure and guileless beyond the wont of men. What compensation *could* she ask for such a death as theirs?

King Egbert stood abashed before the way-worn Queen. His whole frame trembled, as with timid hand he laid a heap of gifts before her. But it was not on the compensation of worldly riches that her mind was set. Her gentle heart was touched by Egbert's deep repentance. He looked upon her mild blue eyes, and there beheld forgiveness. The rest is soon told.

‘Turning fairest face

Unto the slayer—slayer of her loved,

Her last of kin—in gentleness she spoke :

“Let sorrow have swift end. Grief will not bring
Their beauty back from grave. Bless God, and lay
Thy pride here down in sacrifice. O King,
Thy hand is red; yet He may whiten it,
Who only spotless lived, the matchless Lily
That Mary-Mother on her bosom bore.”⁹

The King bowed acquiescence. Ermenberga then petitioned for a grant of land in the Isle of Thanet, whereon to raise a monastery of

⁹ ‘Thunnor’s Slip,’ a poem by E. L. Hervey.

nuns in memory of her beloved brothers. 'And how much of that fair island shall I give thee?' quoth the king. 'As much,' she made reply, 'as my tame deer can run through in one course.' Now, this hind (adds our Saxon writer parenthetically) 'always ran before her when she was travelling.'¹⁰

Egbert was struck with the novelty of the proposition. A smile passed over his pale face the first time for many a day. An hour was accordingly appointed for so novel a way of tracing the boundaries, and St. Theodore, the archbishop, was to be present.¹¹

¹⁰ Op. cit. p. 427.

¹¹ On the subject of King Egbert's penance and satisfaction see Appendix B.

CHAPTER III.

THE STAG LEGEND.

THE Isle of Thanet in the days of King Egbert was more thickly wooded than it is now, more grand in its native wildness, and peopled by a race more stalwart and magnanimous than its actual denizens, but its one feature that has marvellously altered is the river girding it from sea to sea. The Wantsume, or wending wanton water¹ (which is now little else than a dyke) was then a broad and noble channel, flowing between the great harbour of Richboro' and the royal palace of Reculver. Its width, according to St. Bede, was about six hundred yards;² and large vessels used to

¹ 'Winding water, from its bending course. There is a river Wensum, in Norfolk, which has its name from the same source.'—See *Frazer's Mag.*, June, 1859, artic. 'Thanet.'

² *Latitudinis circiter trium stadiorum.*—Cf. *Bed. Hist.*, i. 25.

enter it at Richboro', passing out into the Thames on their way to London.

King Egbert and his retinue forded this river at Saare, on their way from the Kentish mainland to Westgate, the spot determined upon for starting the stag. He had not been there long, when—

‘Horns were heard
Resonant from stem to stem, from rock to rock ;
While moved in sight a stately cavalcade,
Flushing the river's crystal. Of that host
Foremost and saddest, Ermenberga rode,
A queen sad-eyed, with large imperial front
By sorrow seamed ; a lady rode close by ;
Behind her earls and priests. Though proud to man,
Her inborn greatness made her meek to God.’³

The queen's tame deer was let loose close by the bay since called after St. Mildred. It bounded off in a zig-zag course across the island. ‘The queen then so managed that the hind kept running before them, and they followed after her.’⁴ In the midst of this

³ De Vere's ‘Leg. of Sax. Saints,’ p. 192. These beautiful lines are really written of another Ermenberga. The fraud is, however, a pious one, and being confessed, should be forgiven.

⁴ Sic Auct. Sax. loc. cit. The later Canterbury writers seem to have seen a miracle in the stag's course. Thus Jocelyn, ‘Cerva, Divino arbitrio emissa, instar sagittæ evolat.’—Cf. MS. Cott. Vesp., B. xx., in Vit. S. Mild., cap. v.

exciting chase was Thunor, the invidious murderer, almost beside himself with rage. He cursed the king, the queen, the land. But still the stag pressed onward. Then Thunor, goading on his horse, rushed frantically before the animal and tried to turn it back. But the earth, says the old legend, opened its mouth before the hateful murderer, and swallowed him up. Whence the place of this dire retribution was ever after known as *Thunores hlæw*, that is, the grave of Thunor.⁵

Such is the old Saxon legend, which would have delighted the heart of Dante had he known it. The gap or ditch where Thunor met his fate is marked on the oldest map extant of the Isle of Thanet⁶ as *Puteus Thunor*. And the fact is¹ incontestable that between Westgate and Minster there is a raised boundary-mark, known as St. Mildred's Lynch, which is exactly co-extensive with the bounds of Minster manor and parish. This

⁵ The Saxon MS. Cott. Calig., A. xiv., has *þunoper hlæpe*; but the Saxon *w* (*p*) was evidently taken for a *p* in later times. Hence Elmham reads *Thunorhyslope* (i.e. Puteus Thunor), and the place now goes as Thunnor's Leap. This is generally identified with the Chalk-pit above Minster, on Mount Pleasant.

⁶ In Elmham's MS., fol. 28; its latest possible date is 1414.

encloses about ten thousand acres—the original grant by King Egbert to Ermenberga and her spiritual posterity.⁷

In spite of this, one hostile critic will have it that the land enclosed within St. Mildred's Lynch was made up of 'a succession of royal donations to the nunnery within the Isle of Thanet itself . . . extending over several centuries';⁸ while another—an Anglican clergyman like the first—asserts that the Lynch 'very probably was there before ever the manor of Mynstre was granted to Ermenberga.'⁹

Between this Scylla and Charybdis we are not afraid of running our frail monastic bark, with the old legend at its mast-head.

The story of King Egbert's expiation may be viewed as a legend or as an historical fact, or as both. As a legend, it is at once striking and original; in point of fact, we will but say, with Mr. Oswald Cockayne, the editor of two

⁷ 'In Domesday Book these lands then belonging to the Abbot of St. Austin's are thus registered: *In Tanet Hund. S. Mildred., ipse Abbas tenet Tanet manerium quod se defendit pro 48 solins*,—just the number of plough-lands that the monks tell us Ermenberga's deer ran over.'—Lewis' 'Hist. of Thanet,' p. 109, edit. ii.

⁸ 'The Saxon Dynasty,' by the Rev. R. C. Jenkins, p. 39. (See Appendix E, where that statement is refuted.)

⁹ Lewis *op cit.* p. 83.

valuable Saxon fragments relating to Minster, that 'strange as the tale is, it seems in its main features purely historical.'¹⁰

¹⁰ 'Saxon Leechdoms,' Appendix, vol. iii., p. 401 (Rolls Series).

CHAPTER IV.

ST. MILDRED LEAVES FOR CHELLES.

THE old chroniclers say that Ermenberga, on becoming a Benedictine nun, after the events just narrated, took the name of Ebba, or Eve, just as her grand-aunt St. Ethelberga (the first of English nuns) had assumed that of Tate. She thus came to be known as Domna Ebba, or Domneva, in Latin;¹ and in Saxon as Domne Eafe,² and Domne Eve.³ Henceforth we shall call her only by her monastic designation.

‘Domneva built

A goodly dyke, dividing fair in two
Sweet Thanet isled upon the sea ; so far
The innocent roe had marked the land of prayer.
There rose a convent’s walls, where quiet nuns

¹ Cf. Hist. Monast. S. Augustini, p. 226, § 40 (Rolls Series).

² Cf. duo MSS. Sax. ap. Cockayne, op. cit., passim.

³ Cf. MS. Sax. ap. Cod. Harl. 464 transcr. Catholic readers of course know that a Benedictine nun is even now styled as *Dame*, and a monk as *Dom*.

Hymned up meek vows, and filled their souls with tears,
Their lips with prayers for the lost youths who lay
Dead 'neath the throne they should have graced with
beauty.'⁴

Mildred was a maiden already grown up when her mother became Abbess of Minster. Her childhood had been passed amidst the deeply stirring scenes already recounted; while at her mother's knee she had heard of the sanctity of so many of her people, living and dead; and, hearing, she had wondered. Indeed, at this time, says Baronius, the Saxon churches in Britain flourished like the Paradise of our Lord, for they were plentifully adorned with lilies of pure virginity, with violets of religious monks—not so conspicuous because growing in more humble places. They abounded also in most holy Bishops.⁵

With bright examples like these constantly before her, Mildred's thoughts were early turned to heaven. And thus, while the Abbey walls of Minster were rising higher and higher into the blue sky, her heart was being more and more detached from things of earth. She was fifteen years of age when St. Theodore of Canterbury hallowed Domneva's church and

⁴ 'Thunnor's Slip,' by E. L. Hervey.

⁵ Ap. Cressy 'Hist. of Brit.' cit., lib. xviii., cap. xviii.

monastery, placing them under the patronage of the ever-blessed One,

‘Who bore in time the world’s Eternal King,
And peerless in the human race has found
A mother’s joy by virgin honours crown’d.’⁶

The new structures were small, massive stone buildings, almost the first of the kind attempted by Saxon craftsmen. They were only a few yards apart one from the other. The river Wantsume flowed past their walls, forming a kind of creek, a little way off, where ships used to anchor.⁷

Domneva took her three daughters with her on entering the cloister. The eldest of these, St. Mildburg, soon left for Wenlock, in Shropshire, where the fame of her good life has merited her a place in the Roman Martyrology.⁸ Her father, Merwald, and her uncle, Wulphere, both took the greatest interest in her new home, and largely endowed it. Mildgyth, the

⁶ Sedulius, the Irish poet, quoted by Bede.—See ‘Our Lady’s Dowry,’ ch. i.

⁷ The stone foundations of the old church and monastery may still be traced (see *Gentlem. Mag.*, July, 1862, article ‘Minster’). The author of that valuable paper, Mr. Robert Bubb, kindly took me over all this ground, and I am indebted to him for much interesting local information.

⁸ Die xxiii. Feb.

youngest, was destined for the north. Her hidden life and after-renown are thus summed up by a Saxon author: 'St. Mildgyth lies in Northumbria, where her miraculous powers were oft exhibited, and are still.'⁹

As to St. Mildred, her mother determined on sending her to France, where Christianity had been established for a century before St. Augustine's landing in England. Many of the early Saxon Princesses had consequently gone there for their monastic training.¹⁰

It is not surprising that Domneva singled out the Abbey of Chelles for her daughter's education, seeing that it had been founded by her ancestress, Ste. Clotilde, and was then actually governed by the saintly Abbess Bertille. A hearty welcome greeted St. Mildred on her arrival at Chelles.¹¹ Bertille was justly proud of her new pupil, who had come from far-off

⁹ MS. Sax. ap. Cockayne, op. cit., p. 425.

¹⁰ Bed. Hist. iii. 8.

¹¹ St. Bertille was undoubtedly Abbess of Chelles from 656 to 702. Jocelyn of Canterbury calls the Abbess who received St. Mildred, Wilcoma, or Welcome. He seems to play on words: 'Prærat Kalensi asceterio genere et rebus, potens abbatissa in terrisque eruditissima, nomine Wilcoma, quod in salutatione virginis "Bene Venias" resonat Anglica lingua.'—Cf. MS. Cott. Vesp., B. xx., in Vit. S. Mild., cap. viii.

Albion to be fitted, under her guidance, for her betrothal with Christ, the Spouse of virgins.

Mildred soon fell in with the ways of her new associates. She earned their love by her sweet and winning ways. Her humility and dutiful bearing towards her elders was especially noticeable. Nor was she backward with her secular pursuits, for we read of a psalter which she had transcribed, with her own hand, ere her scholastic course was ended. Between study and prayer, and innocent recreation, her time passed peacefully away in those old cloisters of Chelles, until an untoward incident happened which must form the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE LEGEND OF THE FURNACE.

THE *crux* of St. Mildred's history is emphatically the Legend of the Furnace. That story is a mere fable. Its origin is uncertain; but whether or not Jocelyn of Canterbury gave it birth, we may take it that the excitement about St. Mildred's relics in his day coloured his account of it very appreciably. The legend runs as follows :

While Mildred was at Chelles (in the days when Wilcoma was Abbess), a young man of noble birth, a kinsman of that abbess, became enamoured of our Saint, and made her an offer of marriage; this proposal St. Mildred rejected. But the Abbess, who was anxious for the match, tried to coax the maiden; and failing, resorted to threats and ill-usage. Mildred bore this with exemplary meekness, keeping steadfast the while in her first resolve.

Again and again Wilcoma tried to make

her change her purpose, until at last, maddened by vexation, she seized her young pupil, and cast her (so runs the fable) into a fiery furnace. And when, after a lapse of three hours, Wilcoma returned to the scene of her iniquity, swan-like strains issued from amidst the flames. She then opened the furnace, and Mildred issued thence with radiant features and garb unscathed. Unabashed by this portentous condemnation of her unworthy conduct, Wilcoma, finding herself alone with her ward, pounced upon her like a wild animal, and began shamefully ill-treating her.¹

On this St. Mildred made her escape at dead of night; but remembering that she had left some relics behind, she returned to the Abbey, again to take to flight. The Abbess, on discovering this, had the bells rung, called the Bishop to her aid, and sent an armed band in pursuit of the fugitive maiden. After many and wonderful adven-

¹ 'Irruit, invadit, impetit ut læna vitulam ut ursam agnam, ut aquila columbam, itaque insertis utrisque manibus ceu ferratis carpentis in incisam cesariem, teneram puellam allidit in terram, calcat pedibus, tundit pugnibus tanquam plumbatis et coestibus, lacerat et laniat venenatis unguibus, discerpit et extirpat crines furiosis tractibus.'—MS. Cott. Vesp., B. xx., auctore Gotscelino, monacho, sæc. xii.

tures by sea and land, Mildred was at length able to quit France and regain her native shores.

Such is the substance of William Thorne's very modified account of what Jocelyn before him had recorded, with a flourish of rhetoric and redundant laudations, covering several folios of manuscript. John of Tynemouth² follows at a distance in Jocelyn's wake. But he and Capgrave (if the latter be really an independent author) stand alone in this regard.³

Thorne was an honest Thanet man, born within sound of the *Ave* that daily rang from St. Mildred's Minster; he was also a monk of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, whither the body of his island-saint had been translated. All credit is therefore due to him for having gathered all he could about St. Mildred; and the more so, because he very studiously avoids the high-flown rhetoric of his French predecessor, Jocelyn. But William Thorne is the only

² Cf. Vit. S. Mildredæ ap. MS. Cott. Tib., E. i. Pars i., fol. 206 seqq., auctore Joan. Tinm., sæc. xiv.

³ Father Stevenson, in his Introduction to the Historical Society's Bede, speaks of 'John of Tynmouth's *Nova Legenda Angliæ*, printed under the name of Capgrave, in 1516, by Pynson.'

English chronicler who makes mention of the Legend of the Furnace. For even the author of the History of St. Augustine's Abbey—who drew so largely upon his chronicle—does not whisper a syllable about it. This silence is most significant.

Neither is there the least record of such an event in any of the Saxon fragments that have come down to us. On the other hand, one of them incidentally remarks that Mildred 'acquired great sanctity' during her stay at Chelles;⁴ similarly, Durham, Malmsbury, Worcester, Huntingdon, Wendover, Cirencester, Westminster, Brompton, Dicet, and Polydore Virgil, while they all make honourable mention of our Saint, breathe not a word about the Furnace.

As for those glorious confessors of the Faith, like Father Cressy and Father Alford (who found means, in the days of persecution, to write in defence of the old religion), they have either passed it over altogether, or else tried to explain it away; while more modern critics, such as Mabillon and the Bollandists, have simply lost patience over it.⁵

⁴ Cf. MS. Sax. ap. Cod. Harl. 464 transcr.

⁵ 'Hæc aliarumque hoc nugarum genus refellere non vacat. Si tamen Wilcoma unquam Kalæ parthenoni

The fact is (as Mabillon well observes) the historical existence of the Abbess Wilcoma is exceedingly problematical ; and it is perfectly certain that St. Mildred could not have been at Chelles under any other Abbess than St. Bertille.⁶ For St. Bertille ruled the monastery from 656 to 702. Now, as St. Mildred was a girl in King Egbert's reign (and Egbert died in 673), it is quite clear that her education at Chelles must have been completed before 702. Again, as all chroniclers (Saxon and Norman) agree that St. Mildred made her profession as a nun at the hands of St. Theodore of Canterbury (who died in 690), it is quite clear that she must have left Chelles at least twelve years before St. Bertille's demise.

Jocelyn was consequently altogether mis-

præfuit, ea est addenda vulgatis indicibus Kalensium abbatissarum.'—Mabill. 'Acta,' sæc. iii., pars. i., p. 444.

⁶ The order of the Abbesses of Chelles is thus given in 'Gallia Christiana' (tom. vii., p. 557 seqq.):

1. Sancta Bertilla—656-702-(4) ;
2. Sigista.—708 ;
3. Vilcoma seu Wilcoma (*no date*).

The authors of this standard work express doubts on Abbess Wilcoma ; and the only *facts* related of her are given on the authority of Thorne.—Cf. *ib.*, pp. 559-660.

informed in his statement that St. Mildred was educated by the harsh and cruel Abbess Wilcoma. Of course, the moment St. Bertilla is substituted for Wilcoma, the whole legend becomes a sheer impossibility.

We prefer dismissing Jocelyn's legend in this manner, rather than attack it piecemeal. There is an extravagance about the whole narrative, a strain of laboured rhetoric—in fact, an utter want of that simplicity which should at all times characterize the recording of a miracle. The circumstances emphasised by him and Capgrave make it impossible of belief that they should have been associated with a Divine Interposition.⁷ In a word, the whole affair—as the Bollandists put it—*olet figmentum*.

But some will say, how came the legend ever to have been invented? It is so strange, so weird, so essentially unlike any other legend, that it must have some truth in it.⁸

The charitable construction which good Father Cressy (the Benedictine annalist)

⁷ 'Fidem fere superare videntur.'—Cf. Alford *Annal.* ii. p. 254, An. 676.

⁸ Thus Montalembert, 'Moines d'Occident,' tome v., p. 285 (ed. 1878).

puts upon the fable is this: 'Some writers, from an unwary mistake, have related how St. Mildred was cast into a fiery furnace (because while she lived at Chelles in a secular habit she utterly refused the marriage of a person of great quality), and by Divine assistance was preserved from burning. But neither William of Malmsbury nor any other of our ancient records mentions this miracle. Therefore we willingly abstain from adorning that illustrious virgin with borrowed and false or suspected colours.'⁹

Some such material interpretation of a well-known passage in St. Paul may thus have given rise in an enthusiast's mind to the idea of a material furnace, whence the Saint issued free from scathe, even as the blessed Agnes from a house of shame, and the Three Children from their ordeal of fire.¹⁰

⁹ 'Hist. of Brit.,' bk. xvii., ch. 19. The Jesuit Confessor, Father Alford, confirms this view: 'Dixerit forte aliquis Mildredam a Gallico incendio, quod in ejus castitatem parabatur exisse—*quod puto certissimum*. Hinc qui postea scripserunt, *parum caute*, aliud incendium alias flammæ concipientes, ornaverunt Virginem inutili fuco.'—Cf. *Annal. loc. cit.*

¹⁰ Jocelyn is full of these analogies. Thus: 'Quid enim materialia incendia in illam possunt adversus quam incentiva vitiorum et porta inferi non prevalebant. Tutior

‘Si transieris per ignem odor ejus non erit in te.’

hic erat inter flammineos ardores quam inter humanos furores.’—MS. Harl. 3908, ad Matut. in lect. iv. Again: ‘Stans beata Mildretha in mediis flammis, cum beata Agnete, expansis manibus, psallabat et benedicebat Dominum devotione Trium Puerorum. V. Audierunt psallentem martyrem nostram, Igne me examinasti, Domine et non est inventa iniquitas in me.’—Ib. in 1^m Noct. I must here acknowledge my indebtedness to Father Adam Hamilton for having most kindly placed his copious extracts from this MS. (Harl. 3908) at my disposal.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. MILDRED'S FLIGHT TO MILLAM.

THE legend of the Furnace, stripped of its sensational adjuncts, seems to come to this, that during her stay at Chelles, Mildred was courted by a young hot-headed Frank. St. Bertille, holy nun, may even have pressed her to accept the engagement, as she was perfectly free to marry if she chose. But we fancy Mildred replying, with another Saxon maid :

'One love I, One ; within His bridal bower
My feet shall tread ; One love I, One alone :
His Mother was a Virgin, and His Sire
The unfathomed fount of pureness undefiled.
Him love I, whom to love is to be chaste :
Him love I, touched by whom my forehead shines,
Whom she that clasps grows spotless more and more.
Behold to mine His spirit He hath joined.'¹

The young noble, failing utterly in gaining St. Mildred's will, displayed some of those

¹ De Vere's 'Leg. of Sax. Saints,' p. 208.

unruly symptoms but too common in his day on the part of disappointed lovers.

In later times, indeed, a maiden would have felt herself safe within the precincts of the cloister. The hand of the Church would have fallen on anyone daring to trespass within those sacred limits; and men in the impetuous Middle Ages did fear the Church of God. Besides, they had been taught to look on woman as something in herself sacred. Chivalry made them observe towards her what the sentiment of Christianity inspired. And even the outlaw was softened by the essentially Christian public opinion of his day. Thus, of Robin Hood we read how his poetic tenderness for the helpless and forlorn was prompted by the highest motives:—

‘Robyn loved Our dere Lady,
For doute¹ of dedely synne,
Wolde he never do company harme
That ony woman was ynnē.’

But there was no such feeling in the times when St. Mildred lived. Men were then, in great part, still half pagan within the recesses of their hearts.² And the Church had not yet

¹ Fear.

² The Penitential decrees of St. Theodore of Canterbury, and St. Egbert of York, reveal how long and terrible

enacted the strict law of walled enclosure, as she subsequently did. Hence the maiden who resisted the will of a man of ungoverned passion had but little mercy to expect of him.

Not many years before, the blessed Aldegonde had been forced to seek refuge in flight, and to hide herself from such an one in the dense forest of Maubeuge. At home, St. Mildred's own sister Mildburg was wooed in the same fierce manner, and had to fly from the monastery of Wenlock. And over the Welsh border, sweet St. Winefred, in her flight from Prince Caradoc, had her head severed from her body on the spot where ever since her English fellow Christians have witnessed the power of God in His saints.

If these contemporary examples prepare us for a like interpretation of St. Mildred's flight from Chelles,³ an immemorial devotion towards her, which has lasted to this our day, at a place called Millam, in French Flan-

a struggle the Church had with the pagan instincts of her Saxon converts.

³ It is also noteworthy that in the MS. history of Chelles Abbey there is no record of an English princess after St. Mildred. This would tend to confirm the theory that some violence had been done to our Saint's feelings, the report of which was noised over England.

ders, will tend to confirm the belief that she took refuge there. No one knows the origin of this devotion, while the legend that has been kept alive among the people is manifestly but a popular version of St. Mildred's own life.⁴

There has been a chapel to her honour at Millam, time out of mind. The people built it and rebuilt it, without calling in the aid of priest or noble. In fact, there never was a monastery or lordly mansion in any way connected with that chapel of our Saint.

A strong historical presumption may also be drawn from the ancient names of Millam, nigh to which the chapel stands. In the ninth century charters of the grand Flemish Abbey of St. Bertin, the place is designated Muldelhem,⁵ Middelhem,⁶ and Milhem.⁷ Now these names seem directly to refer to our Saint : the Flemish Mulders giving Mulder-hem, and the Latin Mildreda, Mil-hem.

Millam is therefore St. Mildred's hamlet, and we find it so called within a century of her death. Whence it seems more than

⁴ See Appendix G.

⁵ Chartul. Monast. Sti Bertini, An. 826.

⁶ *Ib.*, An. 838.

⁷ *Ib.*, An. 857 ; quoted in 'Statistique Archéol. du Nord.'—Lille, 1862.

probable that she hid herself in its morasses and woodlands in her flight from Chelles, awaiting an opportunity of sailing for England.

It is true that there are now but few trees in the neighbourhood, and the hamlet itself is a full score of miles from the sea. Yet all the antiquarians of Flanders are agreed that the sea once washed the foot of the forest-clad Mount of Watten, where Millam is situated. And the learned Malbrancq, their chief, in a map of the district of the year 800, places Millam on the shore of a long narrow gulf running into the heart of Flanders, and forming a splendid haven almost opposite the Kentish port of Richborough.⁸

St. Mildred may, then, very well have stayed at Millam long enough to have it permanently associated with her fame, just as the neighbouring Killem⁹ is linked with the Celtic St. Killian, and just too as the ancient chapel of Caestre is said to commemorate the spot where, in 819, three Saxon virgin Saints (*Tres Castæ*) were martyred by pagan suitors.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. Malbrancq, 'De Morinis,' tom. i., in præf. lib. i. (edit. princ. An. 1639).

⁹ Killem = Kilian-hem = Kil-hem.—'Etudes Etymol. par E. Maurier.—Paris, 1861.

¹⁰ Cf. Malbrancq, 'De Morinis,' tom. i., lib. v., c. 52-55.

Moreover, Malbrancq distinctly records the tradition that St. Mildred fled to Millam, and there stayed in a rude cell for a while, hidden away from the world.¹¹ And though he does not speak of it in connection with Chelles, that very circumstance does but prove its independent character. Once the fact established that St. Mildred *did* stay at Millam, then it is clear that she sojourned there either on her going to Chelles as a mere girl, or else on her final return home after leaving Chelles. And of the two, the latter is clearly the more probable.

¹¹ 'Innuitur ad tempus in Morinos transfugisse atque sibi cellam extemporalem delegisse in pago Milhem, mediam nominis ejus partem retinente, nunc Millam dicto, ad radicem Watani montis. Hic enim illi etiamnum sacra est aedes, olim advenarum cultu et votis perfrequens.'—
'De Morinis,' tom. i., lib. iv., c. 8. Père Malbrancq, being a Jesuit of the Community of St. Omer, had every opportunity of sifting out the traditions about St. Mildred, as the Jesuit Fathers of St. Omer had their country house four miles only from Millam, on Mount Watten. He is also known to have made good use of the libraries of the neighbouring monasteries, notably those of Clairmarais and St. Bertin. His work, 'De Morinis,' is of the highest authority in local archæological matters.

CHAPTER VII.

PROFESSION OF ST. MILDRED.

WHEN the young fugitive neared the shores of Thanet, her mother, Domneva, her aunt, St. Ermengyth, and all the nuns of Minster, went forth to meet her. Her ship anchored off Ebb's Fleet, close to the beach; and in her anxiety to reach the shore, Mildred stepped on to a large rock, which (tradition says) bore the impress of her foot ever after.

This *Lapis Sanctæ Mildredæ*, or St. Mildred's Rock, is placed out at sea in a map of East Kent, published last century by Lewis. Dean Stanley thinks it the identical rock on which St. Augustine is said to have set foot. 'It was,' he says, 'afterwards called the footmark of St. Mildred; and the rock, even till the beginning of the last century, was called St. Mildred's Rock, from the later Saint of that name, whose fame in the Isle of

Thanet then eclipsed that of Augustine himself.'¹

So far the Dean. Now to our narrative.

Domneva's greeting with her daughter was a most cordial one. She blessed her, in her fulness of heart, in these words: 'Be thou blessed and happy; may thou be rewarded before the Throne of God, and numbered with the choir of virgins.'

Mildred was received at once as a postulant at Minster. The quaint ritual observed on that occasion has been preserved to us in a distinct Saxon fragment.² According to that account, 'Mildred stretched herself before the holy altar with extended limbs, and, with a flood of tears, prayed to the Lord. When she had ended her prayer, she stood up and bowed to her mother's knees, who then greeted her with the kiss of peace, and so did all the com-

¹ Stanley's 'Memorials,' p. 13. It is not clear how St. Mildred's Rock, placed out at sea in Lewis' time, can be identified with St. Augustine's Rock, over which (Dean Stanley, Mr. Planché and others say) a chapel was built at Richboro' in medieval times. Lewis, in his 'History of Thanet' (2nd edit., 1736), distinctly says, 'but a few years ago there was a little rock at Ebb's Fleet called St. Mildred's Rock,' p. 88.—See Map, p. 2.

² MS. Lambert, 427, op. jam cit.

munity.³ And they brought her water for her hands according to the Rule.⁴ To them, then, all seated together, the Abbess began to intone the psalms of David, and thus to say, "We have received Thy mercy, O Lord, in the midst of Thy temple," as Anna and the aged Simeon sang and made music, when they embraced with their arms the great and illustrious Child Jesus, and bore Him into the Temple and made offering.

'She sang then the other verse, "Confirm, O God, what Thou hast wrought in us from Thy holy Temple in Jerusalem." She sang the third, "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to Thy holy Name, and may glory in Thy praise."

'With these and many other divine words she earnestly instructed her dear child and drew her to God. This was easily done to her, as her conscience was all filled with the Spirit of God.'⁵

³ In the MS., the word here translated by 'community' is in the plural.

⁴ 'Aquam in manibus Abbas hospitibus det.'—Reg. Sti. Benedicti, c. 53.

⁵ This translation of the Saxon text, with a few verbal exceptions, is that of the learned Editor of the MS. In the original the Scriptural words are in Latin.

This ceremony was evidently that of our Saint's introduction to the cloister as a postulant. There yet remained another and more solemn rite, by which she was to dedicate herself for ever to her Lord and Spouse :

' Quid petis alma virum Sponso jam dedita Summo ?
Sponsus adest Christus !' ⁶

The Saxon ritual demanded the presence of the Bishop as witness of this supreme act ;⁷ and it was St. Theodore of Canterbury who consecrated St. Mildred, along with seventy other candidates.⁸ This was an extraordinary event in the annals of Kent. The little church of the Virgin Mother could not hold a tithe of the faithful assembled to witness it ; and crowds knelt that day on the grassy meads leading down to the river Wantsume, following as best they could the sacred rites within.

The ceremonies opened with the celebration of Holy Mass. At the Communion all the newly consecrated virgins received the Housel, or Victim of Sacrifice (for so the Saxons called the most Blessed Sacrament).⁹ And, in ac-

⁶ Bed. Hist. iv. 20.

⁷ Sic S. Theodor. Cantuar. ap. Martene de Antiq. Eccl. Rit., tom. ii. c. vi., § 7.

⁸ Cf. MS. Sax. ap. Cod. Harl. 464 transcr.

⁹ See Lingard's 'Antiq. of Sax. Ch.,' vol. i., p. 325.

cordance with a traditional custom, each carried away with her, in a small pyx, enough of the Sacred Elements to communicate privately every morning during the following week.¹⁰

Such was the spirit in which the early English Christian women entered upon their maiden pilgrimage, with the esteem of men and the smile of angels upon them.

Truly, O Lord, Thou hast made such as these but little inferior to the Angels !

¹⁰ Ex Pontific. Salisburg. ap. Martene, loc. cit. § 15.

CHAPTER VIII.

HER MONASTIC LIFE.

THE aged Abbess Domneva was not long in resigning the care of the community into her daughter's hands.¹ For, in the year 694, St. Mildred attended the great Kentish Council of Beccancelde, as Abbess of Minster, while Domneva remained within the cloister.

Withred, son of Eghert, convened this Synod, or *Witenagemot*. Berthwald of Canterbury, and Tobias of Rochester, attended it ; and with them were assembled 'Abbots and Abbesses, and many learned men, to deliberate on furthering the interests of God's churches in Kent.'² There we find laymen forbidden

¹ Although in early Benedictine times the Abbot's rule (like his dignity) lasted for life, yet it was allowed him sometimes to resign his charge for some valid reason. Thus : 'Abbas potest pro humilitate, cum permissione Episcopi, locum suum relinquere.'—Vide 'Capitul. et Fragm. S. Theodori Cantuar.,' ap. Thorpe, p. 307.

² Ang. Sax. Chron. An. 694.

to meddle in Church matters ; safeguards laid down for the appointment of worthy monastic superiors ; while the King and the Bishops are exhorted, in their several spheres, to see to the welfare of those entrusted to their care.³

These ordinances are signed in the usual Saxon way—*signo sanctæ crucis*—by King Withred, the two Kentish Bishops, and others, amongst whom five Abbesses. Of these, St. Mildred (doubtless because of her kinship with the King), signs immediately after the Bishop of Rochester, thus : ✠ *Signum manus Mildredæ Abbatissæ.*

There are eight monasteries of men and of women represented at this Council, viz., those of Canterbury, Reculver, Minster, Dover, Folkestone, Lyminge, Sheppey, and Rochester⁴—all of them founded by King Ethelbert or by his successors.

³ Mabill. Annal. tom. i. lib., xviii. § 29 ; Spelman, 'Concilia,' p. 189 seqq. ; Wilkins, p. 56.

⁴ Sir Henry Spelman, Mabillon and others have perpetuated the misprint of 'Hor' for Hrof, which is but an abbreviation of Hrofceastre, the modern Rochester. Somner, the learned author of 'Antiquities of Canterbury,' has made a marginal note of this in the copy of Spelman's 'Concilia,' belonging to the Dean and Chapter's Library at Canterbury. The author of 'Anglia Sacra,' however, makes no mention of a monastic Rochester so early as this.

Some will trace in this attendance of Abbesses at so early a national council, the origin of the custom, sometime prevailing, whereby certain Abbesses sat in the House of Lords along with the Bishops. Be that as it may, it is nevertheless certain that no woman could speak at a Witenagemot, 'howsoever learned and holy she might be.'⁵ Woman's mission in those days was a silent and a peaceful one.

On her return home to the cloisters of Minster, Mildred set to work perfecting herself and her associates in the monastic discipline. In this St. Aldhelm was her master-guide. His works, in prose and verse, on the high calling of Virginity, are full of the lessons of the Gospel, of the teachings of Austin and Ambrose, Basil and Jerome. In them rings out the tone of *Sursum corda*! and the heart is irresistibly borne higher and higher still:

'Più alto verso l'Ultima Salute.'⁶

A glimpse of St. Mildred's monastic life is given us by Jocelyn, who relates how, by her

⁵ 'Mulier quamvis docta et sancta sit, viros in conventu docere non audeat.'—Cf. Excerpt. S. Ecgberti, Ebor. No. 89, ap. Thorpe 'Ancient Laws,' p. 333, ed. in fol.

⁶ Paradiso, xxxiii. 27.

fervour in psalmody, and in long fasts and vigils, she gave evidence of high Christian attainments. She was, he adds, gentle and kindly to the poor, while she drew the hearts of her spiritual daughters to Christ by her maternal goodness and sympathy. Her aim was ever to serve others rather than to be served, to be loved rather than feared. She was, moreover, meek and patient when any difficulty arose, and always most indulgent towards the sick.⁷

This picture of our saint is found drawn in bolder lines by her Saxon biographer, whose record runs simply thus: 'She was merciful to widows and orphans, and a comforter to all the poor and afflicted, and in all respects of easy temper and tranquil.'⁸ And as her daughters followed her example, it is not surprising to read that a united spirit of charity reigned in the old Minster of the Virgin Mother of God.

Towards the close of the eighth century, Domneva passed to her reward. Her end was

⁷ Père Cahier, S.J., in his '*Caractéristiques des Saints dans l'art populaire*,' says that St. Mildred is often represented attending on the sick, on account of her devotedness to them in life.

⁸ MS. Lambeth 427, op. cit., p. 431,

a most peaceful one. Symeon of Durham refers to it in feeling terms. Indeed, throughout her long life, whether as queen or as abbess, she had proved a truly Christian woman—the saintly mother of her sainted daughters—worthy of the title *Matrona Christi-Dei dilecta*, given of old to St. Perpetua.

Mildred bore her loss bravely. She had now reached that calm region where, in one exercised in virtues from the days of childhood, the soul rests in the spirit of recollection and of prayer as it were by habit. It had been her high privilege to be ever united in spirit with her Maker; for from the dawn of her spiritual life, God had loved her with an everlasting love; He had now called her into solitude, and had spoken to her heart.⁹

We read in Venerable Bede of a holy Saxon monk, who on being questioned by a brother hermit as to the secret of his abiding union with God, answered—

‘Till thou seal
To sounds of earth thine ear,
Sweet friend, thou ne’er shalt feel
Angelic voices near.’

⁹ In Off. Stæ. Gertrudis, V., O.S.B.

And when the holy man's humility was shocked by this unguarded disclosure of his own excellence, he trembled and exclaimed—

'O by the Name most High,
What I have now let fall,
Hush till I lay me down to die,
And go the way of all.'¹⁰

Here, then, are the chief elements of true religious perfection, viz., love of God and annihilation of self. For in proportion as the Saints grew nearer and dearer to their great Exemplar Christ, so did they become more and more timorous of being found out by the world. Hence it comes that there are so many Saints concerning whose inner life we know next to nothing. St. Mildred is one of these. Many, indeed, are the legends and miracles associated with her memory; but of the workings of her own pure soul, the Angels alone have kept a record. For they alone, who know no spot nor wrinkle, were worthy to fathom the white depths of her consecrated love.

Mildred has ever been regarded on earth as a type of true maidenhood; as one who, in all

¹⁰ From St. Bede's 'Acts of St. Cuthbert,' quoted in 'Hermit Saints,' p. 51.

the vicissitudes of life, looked to God and feared not man. The vigilant care she took to make herself less and less unworthy (as she thought) of her high calling, drew down upon her the tender solicitude of the Angels of God. Hence we read how Mildred was guarded by a most affectionate Angel — *amicissimus Angelus*. She was even sometimes vouchsafed corporeal visions of his presence.

Thus once, when slumbering peacefully in her cell, she felt the Evil One was at hand, devising some subtle snare against her, when instantly her Guardian Angel appeared in all the brightness of the light of glory and put the enemy to flight. The Angel then sat beside her, folding his snowy wings over her; for he was jealous of his ward.

At another time it chanced that Mildred had remained in choir after Matins (the community having withdrawn to rest), and was meditating on the Word of God, when all on a sudden the devil extinguished the light by which she was reading. For a moment there was complete darkness; but her befriending Angel, coming to her aid, drove the Wicked One back to the abode of gloom. And forthwith a heavenly light filled the choir, allowing

the Saint to continue her pious reading, and eliciting from her boundless acts of gratitude towards her Maker and Preserver.¹¹

It would be idle to comment on such graceful legends as these. He who cannot understand them at first sight, will never understand them at all. In some, they will give rise to 'a most small sneer.' And yet such persons will, in all probability, comfortably digest such incidents as Luther's Ink-bottle Legend. For even Carlyle, in his apotheosis of that arch-heretic of the West, has been at pains to analyze that legend in his hero's favour.¹² But how would a 'Roman Saint' have fared, think you, if he (*quod absit*) had figured in that affair instead of Doctor Martin?

Some there are who cannot fall in with the poetry of the Catholic Church. They cannot understand how

'Flowers would spring where'er she deigns to stray ;'
and consequently, the religion of their own choosing

'Stands in the desert shivering and forlorn,
A wintry figure, like a withered thorn.'¹³

¹¹ MS. Harl. 3908, in Lect. vii., ad Matut.

¹² 'Hero Worship,' Lect. iv.

¹³ Cowper's 'Table Talk.'

The Christians of Saxon times had a true Catholic instinct on the subject. Simplicity was to them a mind-gift, but not a stain upon their intellects. Love of the wonderful and of things poetical entered largely into their spiritual habits of mind. And in this they but resembled more nearly those little children so dear to the Sacred Heart of the Saviour of men.

CHAPTER IX.

DEATH OF ST. MILDRED.

TOWARDS the close of her earthly pilgrimage, St. Mildred suffered much and grievous bodily pain. Sickness, says Jocelyn, burnt up her enfeebled frame in holocaust to God. Mildred suffered patiently and well. It was God's will that she should herself give proof of that perfect resignation and detachment she had so often inculcated upon others; His will also that she should experience from her spiritual daughters the loving-kindness she had herself so often exhibited towards them. And they, on their part, while dutifully ministering to her earthly wants, ceased not their prayers for the recovery of one so justly dear to them. 'Lord,' they cried, in their full-hearted grief, 'behold whom Thou lovest is sick. But Jesus hearing it, said to them, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God; that the Son of God may be glorified by it.'

It happened one day that, drawn by the influence of Divine Charity, Mildred went to the church of the Virgin Mother, and there spent herself in acts of more than wonted fervour. When lo! the place became filled with incomparable glory, and the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove seemed for a while to rest upon her head and then entered the sanctuary of her heart. From that instant Mildred knew that she was to be called to her heavenly home. And now more than ever did she welcome that fatal pang that was to free her soul for its journey to eternal peace.

She prayed and she sang, says the monk Jocelyn;¹ the praises of the Lord were ever on her lips, while inwardly she offered herself a living sacrifice to her Creator.

At length came the last and long-desired day. The whole sisterhood was overcome with grief. The Abbess Mildred called one and all around her, and besought them to preserve the bond of charity in Christ Jesus, to be ever-mindful of their heavenly calling. The tears of her daughters almost made her waver in her longing for death, so keen was their anguish,

¹ The remainder of this chapter is adapted and abridged from the corresponding passage in Jocelyn—by far the best in his pious Legend.

so deep her love for them. The struggle was a sharp one. But soon St. Mildred recovered her wonted calm, and said to them, 'Daughters, let your longing be to follow me to heaven, rather than to keep me back in this land of sorrow.' And when they asked her for a parting token, tradition runs that she thus addressed them :

'Maintain, most dear ones, peace and holiness among yourselves, continue to love God diligently, and to do good to your neighbour. In the common needs of the monastery take counsel together, with all your hopes centred in God, as beseemeth those dwelling in His courts. Lend a willing ear to the aged among you, and decide in all things with prudence. Bear ye one another's burthens, obey mutually, be of one body and of one spirit, united in the observance of the Rule, true daughters of the house of God. And may the God of peace and of consolation abide for ever with you all.'

After these pious words of maternal tenderness and solicitude, the dying Abbess received the Holy Viaticum with the fervour her life-long charity had deserved, and passed peacefully into rest on the third day before the ides of July.²

² Probably about the year 725, and possibly a little later.

Her body was laid beside that of the good Queen Domneva, in the church of the Virgin Mother of God, with a lighted taper burning before it, as was the wont of the Saxon Christians when a Saint's body was entombed.³

'And now,' says her old biographer, 'she is even nearer to us by her heavenly patronage than she was before by her fellowship on earth. . . . Blessed be God, who rules over all that is holy, and in His saints ever worketh wonders. Amen.'

³ The veneration paid to the relics of Saints in Saxon times is most striking. St. Theodore of Canterbury thus ordains: '*Reliquiæ Sanctorum venerandæ sunt, et si potest fieri, in ecclesia, ubi reliquiæ Sanctorum sunt, candela ardeat per singulas noctes. Si autem paupertas loci non sinit, non nocet eis. In natali Sanctorum incensum incendatur pro reverentia diei, quia ipsi sunt lilia quæ dedere odorem suavitatis, et primitus ecclesiam aspersere sicut spargit incensum.*'—Ap. Thorpe, '*Ancient Laws*,' p. 304.

CHAPTER X.

TRANSLATION OF HER RELICS.

ST. MILDRED was succeeded in the government of Minster Abbey by her disciple, St. Eadberg. The community had grown so numerous during the few preceding years, that the new Abbess set about building a larger monastery. This was eventually dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul by Archbishop Cuthbert, of Canterbury; and as the great majority of the nuns moved into it, the Abbess determined on translating St. Mildred's relics from the old church to their new chapel.¹

This dutiful task was performed with no little pomp and ceremony, clergy and people flocking to witness it. Nor was their piety left without reward, for the body of St. Mildred was found whole and incorrupt. She seemed, say her historians, as though sleeping

¹ MS. Lambeth 427, op. cit., p. 430; et MS. Sax. ap. Cod., Harl. 464, transc.

in a bridal bower. Her very robes were white and spotless. Miracle followed on miracle, and all rejoiced at the manifestation of God's mercy through His lowly handmaid.

The history of England for the next three hundred years rings with the din of wars and conflicts with the Danes or *Heathens*, as the old chroniclers call them. Thanet was a favourite landing-place of theirs, and Minster suffered accordingly.²

Thomas of Elmham, in his 'Historia,' speaks of his determination to write a detailed history of all the Abbesses of Minster from Domneva downwards.³ Unfortunately, he has not done so; and here we can only mention in a passing way that St. Eadberg was succeeded in 751 by Sigeburga, who in 791 gave place to Seledritha, of revered memory. It was during the rule of this Abbess the Heathens stormed the monastery of SS. Peter and Paul, and eventually set it on fire. Seledritha, with fearless courage, secured herself and all her sisterhood within

² There is a spot near Reculver still known as Heathen's Corner; and *per contra*, a field by Ebb's Fleet, where St. Augustine landed, called Cotmanfield, that is, 'the field of the Man of God.'

³ Ap. Hardwicke, p. 217, § 23.

the chapel walls, and there in God's Presence one and all they faced their martyrdom by fire.⁴

Certain writers of our day affect to pooh-pooh the idea of St. Mildred's sarcophagus having survived the wreck of SS. Peter and Paul's. These cynical gentlemen can scarce have examined the remains constantly being dug out of the parched soil of Pompeii. If so, they might advantageously push their travels a little further, and make for the Anticyras.⁵

As a matter of fact, the three Saxon authors so often quoted in these pages all speak of St. Mildred's body being at Minster; and as their several manuscripts do not certainly date before Seledritha's time (or, indeed, much before the Conquest), their simple statement of fact may be taken to outweigh an average amount of pooh-poohing.

The Canterbury chroniclers narrate how King Canute bestowed the manor of Minster

⁴ Thorne places this tragic event under Abbess Leofrune or Lifwine, in 1011; but Jocelyn, who lived in that century, gives the version adopted above. Elmham also, in this regard, follows Jocelyn and not Thorne.

⁵ See Appendix F.

upon the monks of St. Augustine's; and it is curious to read how easily they obtained the old Abbey-lands from the King, and how hard they had to beg for the few bones and whited ashes of the great Minster Saint. It was, in fact, only when Canute was about to leave for Rome in 1031 that he was prevailed upon to vow the translation of St. Mildred's relics to St. Augustine's, Canterbury, in case of a prosperous journey. Canute went and returned from the Apostolic See that same year;⁶ and then Abbot Ælfstan obtained the faculty he had so long desired.

The King's letters reached him on Whitsun-eve. On the following day, he was already at Minster with Dean Godwin and two trusty monks, Bennet and Rudolph; and as it was high-festival, he invited many of his friends and neighbours to a repast, so that no one suspected anything.

When night came on, Ælfstan, with his three brethren, went noiselessly to St. Mildred's shrine and tried to force it open. In this they at first utterly failed; but after much prayer, the lid of the sepulchre was raised,

⁶ Cf. Ang. Sax. Chron. An. cit. The date of the translation is given as 1030, by Thorne.

and the remaining relics of the Saint reverently folded in a white cloth and borne secretly away. The burthen was light, consisting but of fleshless bones, many of them already crumbled into dust; but they gave forth a delightful fragrance, say the Christian chroniclers of the olden time.

The people of Thanet, happening to hear of the monks' doings, gave chase to Abbot Ælfstan, arming themselves with swords and staves and weapons of all sorts, to recover the body of their glorious Saint. But the monks had a fair start; and when the angry multitude first sighted them, they had already secured the ferry boats at Saare, and were rowing swiftly over the broad waters of the Wantsume.

Thus did Abbot Ælfstan elude his angry pursuers, and secure St. Mildred's relics for St. Augustine's minster—the "*mater prima*" of Saxon monasticism.

There is much that is simple and child-like in this homely narrative. It reads almost like a schoolboy's plot, secretly devised and warily carried out. We like it so. St. Mildred's relics, we are told, were placed in a shrine near the high altar—St. Peter's—close

to the big lamp called Jesse, and there Mass was daily celebrated.

But the Saint's relics were not long suffered to remain undisturbed ; for what with the fear of the Danes, and the enlarging of the chapel, they were moved about from place to place in St. Augustine's. We must pass over the pious care that Abbot Scotland had for these holy relics, and a deal more of purely local history, until the year 1262, when Abbot Roger, deeming that the relics were not fittingly honoured, removed them from the seclusion in which they had lain for some years past. Great indeed was his joy on finding the sarcophagus, with an inscription which may be rendered thus :

‘ Beneath this stone lies Mildred, hallowed maid,
By whose sweet prayers be God Himself our aid.’⁷

These holy relics were then enshrined anew, and the Festival of this final translation kept the 20th of February of each succeeding year.⁸

⁷ ‘Clauditur hoc saxo Mildreda sacerrima virgo,
Cujus nos precibus adjuvet Ipse Deus.’

⁸ A sketch of the shrine may be seen in Somner's ‘Canterbury,’ part i., p. 25 (Batterly's edit.).

CHAPTER XI.

HER SHRINE AT CANTERBURY.

FROM the day that St. Mildred's relics were translated to Canterbury, her shrine seems to have been a frequent resort of pilgrims. Indeed, William of Malmesbury declares that no one of all the illustrious Saints within the cloisters of St. Augustine's was held in dearer memory, more loved, or more revered, than was the virgin Mildred.¹

At one time, indeed, there was a bitter controversy about these relics; the regular Canons of St. Gregory claiming to have translated them from Lyminge, in 1085, by authority of Lanfranc, the Archbishop. But the monks of St. Augustine's angrily resented this rival claim; and with good cause. The dispute was long and fiercely waged. Even in the fifteenth century, according to Elmham and Capgrave, it had far from abated.

¹ 'De Gest. Reg.,' ii. 13.

A praiseworthy attempt has been made by Canon Jenkins, of Lyminge, to clear up this difficulty. He claims to have found two Mildreds—the one of Lyminge, the other of Minster. The ‘Gregoriani,’ he maintains, had the one, the ‘Augustiniani’ the other.

The chief authority for this statement is ‘an extract from a chronicle of the monastery of Dover, made by Leland, and written not earlier than the reign of Henry I. “Of King Eadbald,” it runs, “the son of Ethelbert, who after baptism returned to his idols and exiled the Bishops and priests, much may be found in the life of St. Mildred, and how he was recalled to the faith by St. Lawrence,” etc.’²

‘We may here observe,’ says Canon Jenkins, ‘that the Mildred whose history is here referred to, must be that earlier Mildred for whose sake Ethelburga, the sister of Eadbald, is said by her monastic biographers to have founded the nunnery of Lyminge, and not the second Mildred, the foundress of the nunnery of Minster, in Thanet, who was not born till about thirty years after the death of Eadbald, and whose life had not the slightest bearing on

² ‘Archæol. Cant.,’ vol. iii., p. 26.

the circumstances here related.³ The profound silence of the Saxon historians respecting the earlier Mildred, the niece of Ethelburga, which led afterwards to the confusion between the two, and to the long controversy between the monasteries of St. Gregory and St. Augustine on the subject of their relics, arose, without doubt, from the same delicacy which had suppressed all mention of the second wife of Ethelbert. The ill-omened marriage of this Princess with her stepson is believed to have led to the withdrawal of her name from history; and the singular silence which is observed regarding the Mildred who is described as the niece of Ethelburga, can only be accounted for on the ground that she was the daughter of Eadbald by a marriage which caused so much scandal and affliction to the infant Church of Kent.⁴

³ This is by no means self-evident. Eadbald was our St. Mildred's great-grandfather, and it is quite natural that in her 'Life' his history should have been given. In fact, even the short Saxon commemoration of our Saint (MS. Cott. Calig., A. xiv.), begins with the baptism of Ethelbert. It then tells of Eadbald and his Christian wife Emma, of St. Ethelburga, and in fact of the whole family down to the holy virgin who is the subject of our biography, viz., St. Mildred of Minster.

⁴ Mr. Jenkins does not state where and by whom she is so described. There is certainly the second-hand

The second marriage of King Ethelbert, with a person who afterwards proved unworthy of him, is, unfortunately, only too firmly established ; but we cannot say the same of the Mildred whom Canon Jenkins would make the daughter of that nameless Queen. For it is plain that if an earlier Mildred, of Lyminge, had had even a possible historical existence, the monks of St. Augustine's would have pointed their finger to her at once. They had access to more documents than we have now ; and they would certainly not have been slow to avail themselves of so easy a means of terminating what to them was a painful and most vexing controversy.

It is, however, refreshing to read of an endeavour made in our day to settle, in a straightforward way, the old feud between the monks of St. Augustine's and the Canons regular of St. Gregory. And with this acknowledgment we must pass on to our subject matter.

authority of the 'Monasticon' (article 'Lyminge'), but if there are others, surely the author ought to have cited them in support of his altogether novel proposition ; for a personage cannot be called into historical being, on slender and equivocal grounds, in face of the silence of a thousand years.

Of St. Mildred of Minster many wonderful miracles and apparitions are recorded. Some of the latter are exceedingly quaint, and even amusing, as where the Saint boxes the ears of a somnolent brother at St. Augustine's. And this is actually brought as an 'argument' that St. Mildred's body was really at that monastery, and not at St. Gregory's.

Jocelyn lived in the midst of this exciting conflict over St. Mildred's relics. He was the champion of his house; and though he was undoubtedly a good and holy man,⁵ his zeal at times outran his discretion. Indeed, his pamphlet against the 'Gregorians' ⁶ must have afforded a broad target for the shafts of his keen-witted adversaries. Their answer is, however, lost; and perhaps it is as well so.

Passing by the controversial miracles, we are tempted to record one or two as a sample of many others:

1. A drought prevailed when St. Mildred's body was translated to Canterbury; but, soon after, the rain fell in gracious greeting of the Saint's advent.

⁵ See his praise in Malmesbury, 'De Reg.', iv. 1.

⁶ 'Libellus contra inanes B. V. Mildrethæ usurpatores.'
—MS. Cott. Vesp., B. xx.

2. The wife of St. Edward the Confessor, in her sad reverses, was vouchsafed an apparition from St. Mildred, whereby she was not only consoled, but eventually enabled to permanently regain her happiness.

3. A palsied and epileptic woman was suddenly made whole by a vision of the Saint.

4. A palsied man was suddenly restored to health while the Gloria in Excelsis was being sung on St. Mildred's Day. He walked and sang in joyful glee, and the congregation joined him in praise and thanksgiving.

These and similar records may be found in the Harley and Cotton MSS. already quoted ; in the Lessons of St. Mildred, found by Rosweidē at Millam, in Flanders ; and in a sixteenth century MS., now at Valenciennes, and formerly belonging to the famous Abbey of St. Amand.⁷

In a word, the miracles wrought at St. Mildred's shrine at St. Augustine's must have been strikingly wonderful, to have thus enabled Jocelyn to address his contemporary fellow-Christians :

‘ Who is there that has ever approached one so benign in vain ? Who is there that is

⁷ See Appendix H.

blind, or dumb, or deaf, or ailing, from whatsoever cause, in mind or body, who has failed to obtain relief through her intercession? Verily, Mildred (whose name, in her mother-tongue, signifies "Merciful") pours herself out as a sweet balm on all such as have recourse to her.'⁸

⁸ Gotschel. in Libr. de Translat. B. Mildredæ.—MS. Cott. Vesp., B. xx.

CHAPTER XII.

ST. MILDRED'S PUBLIC WORSHIP.

THE public worship of St. Mildred has never been completely broken off. Though it ceased in England, under circumstances that need no telling, it nevertheless survived at Chelles, near Paris, and at Millam in Flanders. And now again, after a lapse of three centuries, it has been re-established in the Isle of Thanet,¹ while there are hopes of its being, ere long, still more generally extended.

'Jam fides et pax et honos pudorque
Priscus et neglecta redire virtus
Audet.'²

The title of Saint, so generally bestowed upon Mildred by Saxon and Norman writers, proves her to have been held in the highest veneration from the earliest times. Still, it was not till the year 1388 that the Holy See

¹ See Appendix K., § 3.

² *Carmen Sæculare*, v., 57.

appointed her festival to be kept in Thanet, on July 13, under the rite of Double.³

A precisely similar observance obtained at Chelles,⁴ until its old Abbey walls were pulled down by a set of marauding miscreants during the French Revolution.

At Millam in Flanders, however, the public celebration of her feast continued down to our own day. This local *cultus* received the highest sanction ; for we find Clement XI., in the year 1704, granting a plenary indulgence *ad septennium* to such as worthily approached the sacraments at St. Mildred's chapel on July 13.⁵

Before the Revolution, indeed, Mass was celebrated there every Friday throughout the year, but since the confiscation of its glebes, the Holy Sacrifice is only offered up during the days of her ecclesiastical feast tide, which are kept as a *Ducas* or popular holiday.⁶

This old Flemish chapel, of immemorial date, is mentioned in the English Martyrology

³ Cf. Elmham, p. 68 ; Thorne, ap. x. Script. col. 2286.

⁴ See an old MS. Hist. of Chelles Abbey, preserved in the library of the Grand Séminaire of Meaux.

⁵ A brief of Clement XI. recently found in the municipal archives of Millam.—See Appendix K., § 2.

⁶ See Appendix G.

of 1608,⁷ and on the old maps of the district in *Flandria Illustrata*; but the present chapel dates only from 1702, having been then built on the exact site of the older structure. There is nothing peculiarly striking in its long grey nave, the fanciful belfry, and Greek façade. But the surrounding scenery is truly picturesque.

St. Mildred's chapel lies in a broad and fruitful valley, midway between the Communes of Millam and Merkeghem. A sluggish brook glides noiselessly beside it, under deep shadow of the ash and willow tree; and all around are fields of rich cereals and green pasturage, save northward, where some spare traces yet survive of a vast primæval forest. This chapel and the brook beside it, called *Sinte Mulders beek*, are places of pilgrimage highly famed in the surrounding country. From miles and miles around fever-stricken people come there to perform their devotions and drink of the brook's healing waters. And many are the graces and favours obtained through *Sinte Mulders'* intercession, if the people's voice speaks truth.

Passing from hospitable Millam, as the

⁷ Die 20 Febr.

Saint herself once did, to the shores of Thanet, our thoughts turn to a small monastery of Benedictine nuns, within bowshot of the ancient church of Mary Mother of God. A passer-by would hardly notice it, so secluded is it amidst the leafy orchards of Minster, 'the Garden of Thanet.'

Thither part of St. Mildred's relics were translated, quite recently, from Deventer, in Holland, where they had been long preserved and honoured.⁸ The Bollandists, in fact, give a long list of ancient authorities, who speak of part of our Saint's relics being honoured at Deventer. How these relics came there is not exactly known;⁹ but from the fact of their having been long preserved in the same shrine as those of SS. Lebuin and Marcellinus (two English missionaries, co-temporaries of St.

⁸ 'Tempore longissimo asservatæ honoratæque.'—Sic regitur in Rescripto Revmi P. Kodde, Sebasteni Archiep., die 10 Nov., 1696, ex Archiv. Eccl. S. Lebuini, Daventr.

⁹ Thorne (col. 1911, ap. X Script.) says that Abbot Egelsin, when he fled in 1071 out of fear of William the Conqueror, took with him the key of St. Mildred's shrine. It is probable that if he took the key with him, he also bore away a part of the relics for devotion's sake. Thorne and Elmham tell us he fled to Dacia; but Dacia is manifestly either a corrupt reading for Dania, or possibly a contraction for Daventria. Some of the relics may thus have been left in the Netherlands, in return for hospitality.

Mildred),¹⁰ we may infer that they were not translated thither by mere hazard.

The restoration of St. Mildred's relics to Thanet took place on the 29th of May, 1882. Pastor Bernard Van den Berg, rector of St. Lebuin's, himself performed this pious task, having first obtained due leave and sanction from his Ordinary, Mgr. Shaepman, Archbishop of Utrecht. Among other distinguished ecclesiastics who took part in the ceremony was the Abbé Félix Bouillet, one of the most zealous promoters of St. Mildred's *cultus* in French Flanders.

A solemn Benediction service was held at St. Augustine's, Ramsgate, on the day of their arrival. They were then borne in solemn procession round the cloisters, while the Litany of the Saints was chanted. On the following day the solemn Votive Mass of St. Mildred was sung at Minster—Pastor Van den Berg was celebrant, Abbé Félix Bouillet deacon, and Dom Hilary Cassal, O.S.B., sub-deacon; the Prior of St. Augustine's preaching from the text, 'Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum: ita desiderat anima mea ad Te, Deus.'

¹⁰ See an interesting account of their life and labours in Cressy's 'Hist. of Brit.,' lib. xxiv. 7; and xx. 13.

The Holy Father, ever mindful of the English faithful, bestowed a plenary Indulgence on such as should assist at these ceremonies ; and by a Rescript of May 14, 1882, further directed that commemoration of the Saint should be made for three days at all Masses said at Ramsgate and Minster.

Such was the day of return of St. Mildred to Thanet. Her welcome home by the sisterhood at Minster was a most cordial one. Once more it proved 'How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.'

The Abbess Mildred's one aim in life was to love God with her whole heart, and to draw others to His love. She is now dead, it is true, and her body is crumbled into dust ; but the fair fame of her virtuous deeds, so far from having died away, still animates the choir of nuns, who in our day follow their peaceful avocations on the very spot where their sainted patron of old gave forth in such abundance 'a good odour of Christ.'¹¹

¹¹ 'Redolebat suavitatem boni Christi odoris.'—MS. Harl. 3908, in Lect. vii., ad Matut.

APPENDIX A.

DATE OF ST. MILDRED'S BIRTH.

THERE have been many and conflicting opinions as to the date of St. Mildred's birth. The Bollandists give quite a bewildering collection of them. But by going back to original sources, it becomes clear that our Saint was born between A.D. 655 and 665.

The former of these dates may be made out thus :

St. Mildred's father, Merwald, was the youngest of four sons, the eldest of whom, Peada by name, married on his conversion in 653.¹ His three brothers were all converted subsequently, and as they all were wedded to Christian wives, we may take it that they all married after the year 653. Especially so in the case of Merwald ; for not only was he the youngest among them, but he married into a family

¹ Bed. Hist. iii. 21.

whose traditions expressly forbade the giving of a Christian maiden to a pagan lord in wedlock.²

St. Mildred, being Merwald's second daughter, could not, therefore, have been born before the year 655.

The latest possible date of her birth may be drawn from the fact that she received the veil at the hands of St. Theodore of Canterbury, who died in 690.³ At this date our Saint must have been at least twenty-five years old, as no Saxon nun could receive the veil before that age.⁴ Hence it is possible for St. Mildred to have been born as late as 665.

After carefully putting together a number of little facts which it would be tedious to reproduce here, it seems to me that the mean between these two dates, viz. 660, is the most likely year of our Saint's birth.

² Bed. Hist. ii. 9.

³ Ibid. v. 8.

⁴ 'Placuit ut ante annos XXV., ætatis, nec diaconus ordinetur, nec virgines consecrentur, nisi ratosnabili necessitate cogente.'—Cf. Sti Ecgberti Excerpt. 91, ap. Martene, op. cit ; et Migne Patrol., vol. 79.

APPENDIX B.

ON KING EGBERT'S EXPIATION.

BESIDES the heavy *weregild* imposed by law in Saxon times for the crime of homicide, there was another and still heavier penalty visited on the culprit seeking reconciliation with God and communion with the Church. Canonical penances were then in full force; and the penance enjoined by St. Theodore of Canterbury on one who should slay his kinsman or a priest, is that he wander barefoot from place to place, an exile from his fatherland, for seven years, visiting the shrines of Saints, and holding aloof from Christian communion.⁵ Such an one, as Sir Walter Scott graphically describes him, wandered with unhallowed feet—

‘A being whom no blessed word
To ghostly peace can bring;
A wretch at whose approach abhorr’d
Recoils each holy thing.’

And even when the trespass had been done undesignedly, the offender had to present himself before his Bishop, who thereupon pronounced judgment on the case.⁶ Kings and

⁵ ‘Pœnitentiale S. Theod. Cantuar.’ ap. Thorpe, p. 276 ed. in folio.

⁶ Ibid. p. 312; coll. cum leg. cit. pp. 104, 105, 106, 521.

princes had to submit to this law. Indeed, it proved a most salutary check on those outbursts of fiery passion which among warlike chieftains often take the place of arguments and plunge whole nations into war. Thus, when St. Mildred's uncle, King Ethelred of Mercia, slew the brother of Egfrid of Northumbria in battle, he atoned for this slaughter, at the instance of St. Theodore, by giving Egfrid a large ransom.⁷

It was therefore only in strict accordance with the customary law of the land that King Egbert, on the murder of his nephews under such suspicious circumstances, sent for his Ordinary, St. Theodore, to arrange about the *weregild* of his crime, and to make the public satisfaction required of him by the Church; and those who object to the King's conduct on *à priori* grounds, should seek some loftier principle than a sneer on which to base their objection.

APPENDIX C.

THE SAXON AND NORMAN RECORDS OF THE STAG LEGEND COMPARED.

THE Saxon account of the foundation of Minster Abbey is preferable to the Norman record, not only because of its priority in date, but because

⁷ Bed. Hist. iv. 21; Malm. de Reg. i. 4.

it is at once more simple and more correct. For instance :

§ 1. The Norman Canterbury chroniclers are wrong in stating that Ermenred died before King Earconbert came to the throne.

Because :

King Eadbald's marriage with Emma took place not before 616,⁸ and he died in 640 :⁹ hence Ermenred was at most twenty-three years old at the time of his father's death and his brother Earconbert's accession. Now all agree that Ermenred had a family of two sons and two, three, or even four daughters by his wife Oslaf. And hence it is unreasonable to suppose that he died at so early an age with a large family of children.

Those who follow the Saxon writers are not liable to this objection ; for they distinctly state that Ermenred was deprived of his sovereignty by craft (*callide*), and lived on in his brother's reign.

§ 2. Again : If the Canterbury authors were right in stating that Ermenred died before the year 640, it is impossible that Ethelred and

⁸ Bed. Hist. ii. 6 ; and Sax. Chron. An. 616.

⁹ Bed. Hist. iii. 8 ; and Sax. Chron. An. 640.

Ethelbert should have been boys or youths (as they assert) at the time of their martyrdom.

For :

If Ermenred died before 640, and Egbert began his reign in 664,¹⁰ Ethelred and Ethelbert, the two sons of Ermenred, must have been at least twenty-four years old at the date of their martyrdom under Egbert.

This objection has been forcibly put by Lewis in his 'History of the Isle of Thanet.'¹¹

But the Saxon narrators are not open to this objection; for they allow Ermenred to have lived on during part of the twenty-four years of his brother's reign; and hence his two sons may have been any age at the beginning of Egbert's reign.

Note, however, that they were youths rather than boys, as they are distinctly praised for leading a life of holy innocence and unspotted purity. They were "Martyrs 'stablished in virginity," like St. Hugh of Lincoln, of whom Chaucer sang.

§ 3. On the other hand, the Canterbury chroniclers are right in saying that it was St. Theodore, and not St. Deusdedit, who adjudged the *weregild* of the youths' murder.

¹⁰ Bed. Hist. iv. 1. ¹¹ Page 80, edit. ii., foot-note.

Because :

Archbishop Deusdedit died on July 14, 664, the same day as King Erkonbert of Kent, King Egbert's father.¹² And he was succeeded by Archbishop Theodore, who was therefore the Ordinary to whom Egbert submitted his case.

But the very blunder of the Saxon authors in saying that Egbert sent for Deusdedit is useful to us, because :

(a) It proves that they did not copy their account of the martyrdom and Stag Legend from Canterbury sources—no Canterbury man could have made such a blunder.

(b) It leads us to infer that the murder of the youths took place very early in Egbert's reign—so early, in fact, that St. Theodore's great name was not yet familiar, as it afterwards became, throughout Saxon England.

And this leads to another point treated in

APPENDIX D.

DATE OF THE FOUNDATION OF MINSTER.

THE Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says :

An. 668 :

This year Pope Vitalian ordained Theodore Archbishop and sent him to Britain.

¹² Bed. Hist. iv. 1.

An. 669 :

This year King Egbert gave Reculver to Basse the Priest, to build a monastery there.

It seems probable that Minster Abbey was founded between these dates. Because :

(a) Reculver, being a royal palace, guarding one of the entrances to the Isle of Thanet, its gift to the monks would certainly have been mentioned in the account of the Stag Legend, had its foundation preceded that of Minster.

(b) Besides, it is hardly likely that Egbert should have first given up his palace at Reculver for religion's sake, and then tacitly connived at the murder of his two nephews.

Rather, it would seem that Minster was founded almost immediately upon Archbishop Theodore's arrival in England, in expiation of the murder of the two youths, and that Reculver was then ceded by the King of his own free grace in the following year, A.D. 669.

For these reasons Minster would seem to have been founded in 668, or early in 669. Mabillon gives the date as 672, and in this the Bollandists concur; but Jocelyn records the event in 670. In any case, it must have

happened between 664 and 673, the chronological limits of Egbert's reign.¹³

APPENDIX E.

ON THE EARLY CHARTERS TO MINSTER ABBEY.

A bold objection has been raised by the Rev. R. C. Jenkins, Rector of Lyminge, against the narrative of the Stag Legend, which, from the fact of its appearing in the *Archæologia Cantiana*, cannot be passed over in silence. He says: The history of the stag 'is convicted of falsehood from the facts relating to the endowment of the nunnery which are disclosed in its successive charters. From these it appears that this was a very gradual process, one grant of land within the island being added to another at irregular intervals, through a long series of years, all these gifts being massed together (but not until the Norman period) in order to form the Manor of Minster.'¹⁴ Elsewhere he speaks in the same strain of 'a succession of royal donations to the nunnery within the Isle of Thanet itself extending over several centuries.'¹⁵

¹³ Cf. A. S. Chron. An. cit.

¹⁴ Archæol. Cant., vol. xii., p. 184, by Canon R. C. Jenkins.

¹⁵ 'The Saxon Dynasty,' p. 39, by the same author.

Now this statement is altogether fallacious. The *facts* of the case are these: There are twelve charters in all relating to Minster Nunnery, extending, not over several centuries, but over the lifetime of four successive Abbesses, viz., Domneva, St. Mildred, St. Eadburg and Sigeburga. Of these charters—in the order followed by Lewis¹⁶:

17 Nos. 1—6 are addressed to Domneva.

18 „ 7—9 to St. Mildred.

19 „ 10—11 to St. Eadburg.

20 „ 12 to Sigeburga.

Now, *not one of these charters addressed to St. Mildred, St. Eadburg and Sigeburga has anything to do with land in the Isle of Thanet.*

Only one of them (No. 8) refers to land at all. That is the charter of Ethelbert, son of Withred, granting one plough-measure near the river Limene, and some meadow-land at Hammespot to St. Mildred in 724. But the

¹⁶ Lewis's 'Hist. of Thanet,' Appendix, pp. 54-67 (second edition).

¹⁷ 'Codex Diplomat.,' vol. i., chart. viii., x., xiv., xv., xxxvii., xlii.

¹⁸ Ibid., chart. xxxix., lxii., lxxxiv.

¹⁹ Ibid., chart. cvii., xcvi.

²⁰ Ibid., chart. cxii.

river Limene is certainly not in Thanet, and we may presume Hammespot (from want of positive knowledge) to have been in the neighbourhood of Limene.

We have now narrowed the issue within *six* charters granted to *one* Abbess, viz., to Domneva. Of these six charters Nos. 1 and 4 relate to land given to Domneva at Sturry and Bodesham. Now, these places are miles out of Thanet.

No. 3 refers to a grant of property 'in Sudaneie intra insulam Thanet' as Kemble and Elmham have it, but Thorne (who was a Thanet man) writes, 'Insudaneye *juxta* insulam de Thanet.'²¹ The presumption is therefore that Thorne is right, and that Sudaneye was nigh to, but not in, the Isle of Thanet.

Lastly, Charters 2, 5, 6, do certainly refer to grants of land to Domneva within the Isle of Thanet. Charter No. 2 relates to some land in the island 'quam aliquando Yrmen-redus possidebat,' and Charters 5 and 6 to land at Hummatum²² and Haeg granted to that same Abbess; but there is nothing to show

²¹ Gul. Thorne, ap. x. Script. col. 1770.

²² Thorne reads Opmaton and Ledene, ap. x. Script. col. 1771; Elmham has Humantun; and Sir H. Spelman Humantium.—'Concilia,' vol. i., p. 192.

that these places were within the boundary of St. Mildred's Lynch. They are certainly not so marked on Elmham's ecclesiastical map of Thanet. And as they were grants to Domneva, made subsequenely to that of Egbert, we may take it the later Kings added Haeg and Hummatun to the original gift, just as they added Sturry, Bodesham, and the land near Limene, which were certainly without the island. It may also be added that Charter 2 has been critically examined over and over again, and discredited—amongst others by the learned editor of the 'Saxon Fragments,'²³ from which we have so often quoted ; and had Mr. Jenkins been at pains to read the preface to those Fragments, as profitably as he did Mr. Hardwicke's introduction to the *Historia Monasterii Sti. Augustini*, he might have been more sparing in his ungenerous remarks on the monks of St. Augustine's. Indeed, we have reason to complain of Canon Jenkins' paper as containing some statements and commentaries of a nature ill-becoming a man of his attainments. Thus, in the statement before us, one can hardly put up with a scholar of repute speaking of at most *four* charters granted to

²³ The Rev. Oswald Cockayne in 'Saxon Leechdoms,' vol. iii., Appendix.

one Abbess as 'a succession of royal donations—one grant of land within the island being added to another at irregular intervals, through a long series of years, all these gifts being massed together (but not until the Norman period) in order to form the Manor of Minster.'

APPENDIX F.

ON THE PRESERVATION OF ST. MILDRED'S
RELICS AT MINSTER.

It is well known that the art of building in stone was only reintroduced into England in the seventh century by SS. Paulinus, Bennet Biscop, and Wilfrid of York, who one and all had acquired it at Rome. But long after their day, churches and monasteries continued to be built with oaken planks or with wattles, roofed with reeds or sheeted over with lead.²⁴ And sometimes the old and the new styles were combined in the one building.²⁵ Thus St. Bede speaks of a church at Campodonum being burnt along with the town by the heathens, 'but the altar *being of stone* escaped the fire.'²⁶

²⁴ Gul. Malm. de Antiq. Glaston, ap. Milner 'Eccl. Archit.,' cit.

²⁵ Bed. Hist. ii. 14.

²⁶ Ibid.

A precisely similar circumstance may have saved St. Mildred's shrine, which was of stone,²⁷ while the lighter fabrics of the cloistered building perished in the flames.

Some, it is true, will but mock the more on seeing this explanation of what to them appears a 'monkish invention.' They have sneered at St. Mildred herself, and cannot therefore be expected to have much patience with those who so piously cared for her relics. Still, as the contents of a Christian grave can hardly have been of much value in the eyes of the heathen Danes, we may take it, I think, that St. Mildred's bones were left unheeded amidst the ruins of SS. Peter and Paul's chapel, and not treated as were those of St. Thomas of Canterbury some centuries later. For of the Danes, at least, it may be said—

'They did not know how hate can burn
In hearts once changed from soft to stern,
Nor all the false and fatal zeal
The converts of revenge can feel.'²⁸

²⁷ This sepulchre was so substantial that the Canterbury monks failed to open it for a long time; 'nullis instrumentis tumbam virginis poterant aperire.'—Cf. Gul. Thorne, ap. Decem Script. col. 1910.

²⁸ 'Siege of Corinth,' § 12.

APPENDIX G.

THE LEGEND OF MILLAM.

THE legend of St. Mildred of Millam runs as follows:—

On a brook near the forest of Ravensberg a statue was found standing upon a stone and floating up-stream. It was twice borne to the parish church, and twice returned to the place where it was first found. A chapel was accordingly raised on that very spot to the Saint's honour. Her statue was ensconced beside the high altar with this legend at its feet: '*Sancta Mildreda ora pro nobis.*'²⁹

This story may be heard from the lips of any of the well-to-do yeomen farmers in the vicinity of Millam. Doubtless the imagination of their ancestors played upon the original legend; and their love of the wonderful set the statue upon a stone and made it float up stream. Yet the Flemish, as a race, are not held to be highly imaginative.

One conclusion, however, can be positively

²⁹ From the account sent by Abbé Goris of Millam to his diocesan, Card. Giraud of Cambrai, in the year 1846, as recorded in the '*Registre Paroissial de Millam*,' p. 72. I am indebted to the courtesy of M. l'Abbé Meesemacker, the present Curé, for the perusal of this and other ecclesiastical papers relating to Millam.

drawn from the legend, viz., that St. Mildred must have been known and loved at Millam *before* the statue ever made its appearance. Else, how came it to be named after her?

In the eyes of the people, St. Mildred is still their constant benefactress. And while they look up to her in time of need,³⁰ they are not unmindful of her in their festive seasons.

There are in the neighbourhood of Millam two yearly feasts or *Ducas*, the one in honour of St. Omer, patron of the parish, the other of St. Mildred, the people's patroness. On each occasion, as it comes round year by year, family parties are made up, a fair is held, and general holiday kept on the festival of the Saint and the two following days.

The *Ducas* of St. Mildred opens on her feast, July 13, or rather, now, on the Sunday nearest to that day, either before or after it. Mass, up to 1869, was said by the Curé and

³⁰ St. Mildred of Millam is especially invoked for the cure of the fearful marsh-fevers prevailing at Millam. And it is curious to read of the following twelfth century Kentish custom in the pages of Jocelyn : ' Hinc [ad Lapidem Stæ. Mildrithæ] pergunt adhuc *febricitantes* vel ceteri morbidi ex antiqua consuetudine lapidem radere, et hoc pulvere potato, certam medelam haurire.'—MS. Harl. 3908, ad. Lect. vi. in Matut.

other priests at the chapel ; and after Vespers, dancing and merry-making was the order of the day. In former times the dancing used to cease at sunset, and the parties went home to begin a fresh round of revels amidst their own friends and acquaintances. But latterly it became 'fashionable' to prolong the out-door sports until past midnight.

From the chapel to the village is a good half hour's walk ; and as drinking goes on, more or less, all day long, *more Flandrico*, during *Ducas*, it is not surprising that scenes of misconduct were loudly complained of.

In consequence of this the Archbishop of Cambrai, on the 17th of July, 1869, sent an order forbidding the celebration of Mass or the chanting of Vespers in St. Mildred's Chapel. Abbé Baillieu, then Curé of Millam, was much grieved at this. The Mass on St. Mildred's Day was a time-honoured institution. It had survived the great Revolution. The people loved the Saint. The wrong-doers were few. The good Abbé demurred to this sweeping measure, and not without effect ; for, on the 27th of August following, he was informed that if he could obtain guarantees from the civil authorities, and the goodwill of the people against the recurrence of the

scandals complained of, the Archbishop was disposed to temporize.

Everybody knows that the following year found France in the death-grip of Prussia. And never since has the Holy of Holies been lifted up within St. Mildred's Chapel. The people, it is true, still go there to pray. A sconce of some eighty tapers, before the Saint's statue, testifies to the devotion within them. But the Interdict has disallowed the Bodily Presence of the Prince of Peace ; and, till He returns, all is there stark and desolate.

The origin of the popular devotion to St. Mildred at Millam is lost to historic record. Her chapel we believe to have taken the place of the oratory built over the cell occupied by the Saint after her flight from Chelles. But it was never associated with any religious community,³¹ and consequently no monastic record of its existence has survived. Nevertheless, it has kept its humble place so firmly in the people's mind, that even now they think of their *Sinte Mulders* every bit as proudly as their forefathers did of the Augustinian

³¹ 'Ecclesia seu Capella Sanctæ Mildredæ, nuncupati Pagi de Millam, Andomarensis diocesis, non tamen Regularium.'—Cf. Brev. Clementis XI., in Append. K.

shrines at Watten,³² of those of the Bernardines at Ravensberg,³³ of St. Winnoc's at Berg,³⁴ or the grand Benedictine Abbey of Our Lady of Bourbourg,³⁵ where St. Thomas of Canterbury took refuge in his flight from Henry. Indeed, all these have passed away, while St. Mildred's Chapel still remains.

The folk-lore of this little out-of-the-way place is of great interest to us, as it gives a continuity to the public worship of our Saint, which otherwise would have been broken—in England at the overthrow of the ancient faith, and in France when the towers of Chelles were pulled down by a mob of ruffians and committed to the flames.

³² Founded 1072, A.D.

³³ A.D. 1194.

³⁴ Ninth or tenth century.

³⁵ A.D. 1039. The writer made it a point to read up the history of all the neighbouring monasteries to try and connect the origin of St. Mildred's Chapel with one or other of them; he also examined the accounts of the chapel for the last two or three hundred years, and could find no trace in them of any community as having aught to do with the place. The brief of Clement XI. bears this out. The chapel now forms part of the property belonging to the farm called after St. Mildred.

APPENDIX H.

ON THE MSS. OF ST. MILDRED'S LESSONS.

THERE is a remarkable similarity between the MS. of St. Mildred's Lessons which (the Bollandists tell us) Rosweide found at Millam, some three hundred years ago, and the corresponding MS., by Jocelyn, in the British Museum; while the MS. of the old 'Abbey of St. Amand, now at the public library of Valenciennes, is merely an abridgment of these.

I must leave it to those competent in such matters to decide what authority, if any, attaches to these Lessons, and to the 'Missa de Sancta Mildreda,' found in Jocelyn's MS. of the twelfth century.³⁶ They may have had the approval of the 'local Abbot or even of the Ordinary; yet these Lessons and Missa seem to me mere 'tentative' compositions, or pious effusions on the part of Jocelyn, who also set the 'Historia' of St. Mildred, beginning, 'Gaude virgo gloriosa,' to music. These records would thus have some historical value, but no ecclesiastical sanction.

The reader may like to see a sample of the

³⁶ MS. Harl. 3908.

three versions of the Saint's Lessons side by side. For this purpose we subjoin the several readings of

LECTIO II.

Ex MS. Harl. 3,908. Ex MS. Milhemensi, Ex MS. Monast. S. a Bolland recens. Amandi.³³

Gloriosa autem Domneva tres preciosissimas Sanctæ Trinitatis gemmas, tres sanctimonie sponsas Mildburgam Myldretham et Mildgytham florificavit, et hoc quasi trifolium lilium pro sceptro tulit. Nomina simillima, par formarum gloria, æqualis gratia, mens et amor et sanctitas trium erat unica. Hinc Mildburga ut fides, inde Mildgytham spes, Mildretha ut coruscat Mildretha ut charitas. ³⁷ Nam in Salomonis media charitate constrata sunt.	Gloriosissima autem Domneva tres pretiocissimas flores Sanctæ Trinitatis, tres sanctissimas Christo sponsas Milburgam, Mildburgam, Mildretham et Milgiredam et Milgytham florificavit, et hoc quasi trifolium lilium pro sceptro tulit. Nomina simillima, par formarum gloria, æqualis gratia, mens et amor et sanctitas trium erat unica. Hinc Milburga ut fides, Milgitata ut spes, media coruscat Mildretha ut charitas. Nam in reclinatorio Salomonis media charitate constrata sunt.	Gloriosa autem Domneva tres preciosissimas Sanctæ Trinitatis gemmas, tres sanctimonie sponsas Mildburgam, Mildretham et Milgytham florificavit.
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Sed Domneva propter necem germanorum suorum Athelredi atque Athelberti, quos Christi martyres columna lucis de cælo fusa, mox declaravit, accersita ab Egberto rege nepote suo de regno Merciorum, quadraginta octo aratorum possessionem accepit, proposita scilicet conditione quantum cerva ipsius domestica uno impetu	Sed Domneva post necem germanorum suorum Addeledi atque Adelberti, quos et in martyres co-Christi martyres columna lucis, de cælo fusa, mox declaravit, accersita ab Egberto rege nepote suo de regno Merciorum, regno Merciorum, quadraginta octo aratorum possessionem accepit, proposita scilicet conditione quantum cerva ipsius domestica uno impetu	Sed Domneva propter necem germanorum suorum Athelredi atque Athelberti, quos Christi martyres columna lucis, de cælo fusa, mox declaravit, accersita ab Egberto rege nepote suo de regno Merciorum, regno Merciorum, quadraginta octo aratorum possessionem accepit, proposita scilicet conditione quantum cerva ipsius domestica uno impetu
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³⁷ 'Nam in Cantico Canticorum, media charitate constrata sunt; et ut aliquid hic de poetarum fabulis adjungamus, tres erant parilis gratiæ sorores.'—MS. Cott. Vesp., B. xx., auctore Gotscelino, fol. 196.

³³ I am indebted for this version to M. l'Abbé Félix Bouillet, my own transcript having been mislaid or lost.

excurrere poterat excurrere poterat, excurrere poterat sicut
sicut ipsa Divino sicut ipsa Divino ipsa Divino Spiritu
Spiritu volebat. Hic Spiritu volebat. Hic volebat. Hoc itaque
itaque virginalis cæno- itaque virginalis cæno- virginalis cænobium in
bium in honore Dei bium in honore Dei honore Dei genitricis
genitricis constituit, Genitricis constituit, instituit et a sancto
et a sancto archipræ- et a sancto archipræ- archipresule Theodoro
sule Theodoro dedi- sule Theodoro dedicari dedicari obtinuit, tur-
cari obtinuit, turbæque obtinuit, turbæque vir- bæque virginum reli-
virginum religiosissimæ ginum religiosissimæ giouissimæ ibidem
simæ ibidem prima ibidem prima materna prima mater præfulsit.
mater præfulsit. Sic- dignitate præfulsit; Sicque beatam Mild-
que beatam Mildre- sicque beatam Mild- retham hinc genitivæ
tham huic genitivæ retham hinc genuinæ religioni suæ secum
religionis suæ secum regionis suæ secum perpetuavit. Poterat
perpetuavit. Poterat perpetuavit. Poterat tunc videri quindi-
tunc videri quinden- tunc videri quindi- cennis pusiola, vel
nis pusiola, vel beatæ cennis pusiola, vel beatæ martyris Ag-
martyris Agnetis beatæ Martyris tuæ netis coeva, sensu vere
coeva, sensu vero Agnetis coeva, sensu agnetino æque gran-
agnetino æque gran- vero agnetuso æque deva.
deva. grandeva.

It is clear that these texts have been derived from one and the same source, viz., from Jocelyn, monk of St. Augustine's, Canterbury. The Harleian Codex must therefore be taken as the original version. And if it should be asked, How, then, did the little Flemish village of Millam come to get so exact a copy of it? an answer will be found in the fact that Jocelyn was formerly a monk of the old Flemish Abbey of St. Bertin. He was, says Malmesbury, equally versed in literature and music, and came over to England with Herman, Bishop of Salisbury.³⁹

No doubt, therefore, that a copy of St. Mildred's Lessons was sent to St. Bertin's

³⁹ Gul. Malm., 'De Reg.,' iv., 1.

Abbey, at some date unknown; and from thence transferred to Millam to supply a want which the votaries of St. Mildred there must have long suffered—viz., a written history of their patron Saint.

Rosweide most probably made a copy of this MS. when he came across it at Millam, for in his '*Fast. Sanctorum quorum vitæ in Belgicis Bibliothecis manuscriptæ*,'⁴⁰ we find, p. 48, '*Mildreda V. et Abbatissa in Thaneto, 13 Jul.*' This would be the transcript which the Bollandists now possess.

The copy at Millam as appears from the testimony of Abbé Goris, Curé of Millam, had been seen by people (living at the date of his writing, 1846) among the municipal archives, where it was kept in a tin box.

Writing to the Secretary of Cardinal Giraud, he says: '*Plusieurs de mes paroissiens dignes de foi m'ont assuré qu'ils ont vu dans une boîte en fer blanc qui se trouve encore aujourd'hui dans une armoire à la Mairie, un MS. en Latin qui rapporte à quelle époque et comment la chapelle de Ste. Mildrède a été bâtie, les miracles qui y ont été opérés, les pèlerinages que l'on y faisait pour*

⁴⁰ Collectore H. Rosweydo, S. J. Ultrajectino, Antwerpiae, 1607.

obtenir la guérison des différentes maladies et des autres grâces dont on avait besoin, mais ce MS. ne se trouve plus dans la boîte. J'espérais le trouver dans les archives d'état civil ou entre les mains du propriétaire de la chapelle. Je suis au grand regret de devoir vous dire que toutes mes recherches et toutes mes démarches ont été infructueuses à ce sujet.⁴¹

The Latin MS. here referred to is clearly that of the Lessons which Rosweide found there.⁴² I also searched for it at the Mairie, and in old cupboards in the farm called St. Mildred's (nigh to her chapel); also in the *grenier* of the cottage contiguous to the chapel; and again in the belfry and about the altar—in fact, everywhere I could think of as a possible stowing-place; but I met with no better luck than did the Abbé Goris. Maybe it disappeared at the Revolution.

⁴¹ From the 'Registre Paroissial de Millam,' p. 71.

⁴² The contents of the MS., as given by M. Goris on the hearsay of his parishioners (who can hardly have been familiar with Latin), must not be taken too literally. But as to the *fact* of there being a Latin MS. relating to their Saint at the Mairie, in a tin box, they were perfectly reliable witnesses.

APPENDIX I.

THE TABLEAUX IN ST. MILDRED'S CHAPEL.

THERE are six large oil-paintings covering the walls of Millam Chapel, which represent the history of St. Mildred's life, according to the Lessons of her Office. Their author was the younger Pieters, who (as he himself tells us) was twenty-two years of age when, in 1780, he completed the series. At the bottom of each picture is a board, running the whole length of the frame, explaining in Flemish the subject represented. The inscriptions are as follows :

FIRST PICTURE.

St. Mildred takes leave of her family, and embarks for France.

Legend.

‘Mildreda wiert gewesen van haere moeder suster ende broeder naer de abdie Selle in Vrankrick toonen haer het schep.’

SECOND PICTURE.

She is welcomed, on landing in France, by the nuns of Chelles.

Legend.

‘Mildreda te schepe gaende komt in de

haven van Vrankeryck. De religieusen komen haer tegen van het clooster Selle.

THIRD PICTURE.

A young man is seen asking St. Mildred's hand. She rejects him; an angel stands beside her.

Legend.

'Mildreda in het klooster synde, eenen jongelynk op haer bekoort, die de neve was van de abdesse, vraegde haer trouwe, het gonne sij weigerde.'

FOURTH PICTURE.

Mildred is cast into a fiery furnace by the Abbess, but issues scatheless, all the nuns looking on from over the monastery wall.

Legend.

'Mildreda wiert van de abdesse in de gevangenis gesteken, ende daer naer in den hooven, om dat sy de trouwe weygerde aen haere neve, komt ongeschonden uyt het vier.'

FIFTH PICTURE.

She lands in Thanet, leaving her foot-print on a rock.

Legend.

'Mildreda keert weder te schepe naer Tanet; met haer brengende eenen nagel van het h. kruys; van het shep gaende, sijn haer voeten geprint in eenen steen.'

SIXTH PICTURE.

She is instituted as Abbess by St. Theodore at Minster.

Legend.

‘ Mildreda wiert verkoosen van den bischop om abdesse te wesen tot Tanet in de plaetse van haere moeÿe Edburga die gestorven was. —1780, Pieters invt. ætatis 22.’

These tableaux are not devoid of artistic merit, though they treat St. Mildred's legend in a sadly conventional manner. All the personages (the Saint herself among them) are dressed Louis-Quinze fashion, and move about in the superlative elegance of that time. The effect is at times grotesque in the extreme. Perhaps the best part of the work, as such, are the little winged angels—*amorini* they should perhaps be called—which constantly hover over the various scenes depicted, looking down smilingly upon them.

A seventh large picture, representing St. Mildred in prayer, which formerly was the altar-piece of Millam Chapel, has found its way to the chapel of St. Mildred at Minster. It had been long stowed away in a garret, and was in consequence so damaged, that only the upper part of the figure could be restored.

APPENDIX K.

ON SOME PAPAL RESCRIPTS CONCERNING ST.
MILDRED.

§ 1. BULL OF URBAN VI., A.D. 1388.

IN the 'Chronologia Augustiniana' ⁴³ is found the following entry :

'An. 1388. Bulla quod festum sanctæ Mildredæ virginis celebretur sub duplici festo in Thaneto.'

The self-same statement occurs in Thorne, ⁴⁴ but the text of the Bull itself has not yet been discovered, in spite of the diligent search that has been made for it.

§ 2. BRIEF OF CLEMENT XI., A.D. 1704. ⁴⁵

'Clemens PP. XI.

'Universis Christi fidelibus præsentis literas inspecturis salutem et apostolicam benedictionem.

'Ad augendam fidelium religionem et animarum salutem cœlestibus Ecclesiæ thesauris pia charitate intenti, omnibus utriusque sexus Christi fidelibus vere pœnitentibus, et con-

⁴³ Cf. 'Annales Sti. Augustini,' ap. Hardwick, p. 68.

⁴⁴ Cf. Thorn, ap. Decem Script., col. 2286.

⁴⁵ Copied from the Original Brief, discovered among the archives of the Mairie of Millam, in French Flanders.

fessis, ac sacra Communione refectis, qui Ecclesiam seu Capellam Sanctæ Mildredæ nuncupati Pagi de Millam Audomarensis diocesis, non tamen Regularium, cui Ecclesiæ, ejus Capellis, et altaribus, sive omnibus, sive singulis, eamque seu eas, vel ea, aut illarum seu illorum, singulas, vel singula etiam visitantibus nulla alia Indulgentia reperitur concessa, die decima tertia Julii a primis vesperis usque ad occasum solis diei hujusmodi singulis annis devotè visitaverint, et ibi pro Christianorum principum concordia, hæresum extirpatione, ac Sanctæ matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione, pias ad Deum preces effuderint, plenariam Indulgentiam, et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

‘Præsentibus ad septennium tantum validis.

‘Volumus autem ut si alias Christi fidelibus in quocumque alio anni die dictam Ecclesiam, seu Capellam, aut altare in ea situm visitantibus, aliqua alia Indulgentia perpetuò vel ad tempus nondum elapsam duratura concessa fuerit, vel si pro impressione, presentatione, admissione seu publicatione præsentium aliquid, vel minimum detur, aut spontè oblatum recipiatur, præsentibus nullæ sint.

‘Datum Romæ sub annulo Piscatoris, die

xxiii Decembris MDCCIV, Pontificatus Nostri
Anno Quinto.

‘Gratis pro Deo et Scra ⁴⁶

‘TOLIVERUS.’

‘Vicarii generales Illmi et Rmi Dni Episcopi Audomarensis permiserunt publicari hoc breve apostolicum juxta sui formam et tenorem.

‘Datum Audomari, die 2^o Maii, 1705.

‘De Mandato, etc.

‘LOUBET, Sec.’

§ 3. DECREE OF THE S. CONG. OF RITES,
A.D. 1881.

‘Decretum S.R.C. de cultu Stæ. Mildredæ,
V.A., O.S.B., in Anglia.

‘Etsi apud Monachos Asceterii Sancti Benedicti a Sancto Augustino nuncupati ac siti in loco cujus nomen vulgo Ramsgate, necnon penes Sanctimoniales ejusdem Ordinis in Asceterio degentes loci vulgo Minster, in Anglia, memoria Sanctæ Mildrethæ Virginis in benedictione adhuc permaneant quæ ante schisma Anglicanum publico cultu præstans Ecclesias etiam ipsi dicatas habuit, prout plura monu-

⁴⁶ Ita in MS.

menta testantur; nihilominus non nisi privata devotione ab ipsis hæc Sancta Virgo nunc honoratur et colitur.

‘Quampropter Rmus Pater Dom Adalbertus Sullivan, Pro-Visitor Provinciæ Anglicæ Congregationis Cassinensis communibus votis satisfactorius, suffragio quoque suffultus tum Emi et Rmi Domini Cardinalis Archiepiscopi Westmonasteriensis, tum Rmi Episcopi Suthwarcensis, Sanctissimo Domino Nostro Leoni Papæ XIII. humillimas preces porrexit expostulans ut in utroque supradicto Asceterio Festum præfatæ Sanctæ Mildrethæ celebrari quotannis die 13 Julii concederet cum Officio et Missa de communi Virginum primo loco, in priori quidem ex iisdem Asceteriis sub ritu duplici majore, in altero vero sub ritu duplicis primæ classis cum Octava,—Sanctitas porro sua, referente subscripto Sacrorum Rituum Congregationis Secretario, attento voto R. P. D. Sanctæ Fidei Promotorio, necnon Assessoris ipsius Sacræ Congregationis, de speciali gratia ita his precibus benigne indulgere dignata est ut in Kalendario Monasterii de Ramsgate Festum ejusdem Sanctæ Mildrethæ inseri debeat sub ritu petito, nempe duplici majore, et in Kalendario Monasterii de Minster sub ritu tantum duplicis secundæ classis absque

Octava. Servatis rite Rubricis. Contrariis
non obstantibus quibuscumque.

‘ Die 13 Januarii, 1881.

‘ D. CARD. BARTOLINI,

‘ S.R.C. Præf.

L. ✠ S.

P. RALLI,

S.R.C. Sec.

By the same Author.

LIFE OF FRA BENVENUTO BAMBOZZI, O.M.C.¹

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN (2ND EDIT.)

OF FATHER NICHOLAS TREGGIARI, O.M.C.

(HIS SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR DURING THIRTY YEARS).

To which is added an

APPENDIX

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'A great number of miraculous cures, if we may trust eye-witnesses, were wrought both before and after death by this worthy son of St. Francis; but the characteristic lesson of his life, is the sanctity of doing ordinary actions with extreme perfection. His example is, if we may be permitted to say such a thing, almost the example of his great patron, St. Joseph of Cupertino, brought within reach of imitation. Like him, he had no naturally great talents, but like him, he had a treasure beyond all intellectual endowments, the "out-and-out" will by which Saints are Saints. He worked hard, he courted humiliation, and he subdued every movement of anger with a *Viva Maria* . . . Father Benvenuto is one of the latest of the Saints, for his happy death only took place on the 4th of March, 1875. . . . One little incident will reveal his character. In the discharge of his duty as Vicar of the Holy Office, a burthen which was laid on his shoulders while he was

¹ London: R. Washbourne. Published price 5s. The remaining copies may be had at 2s. 6d. *nett*, postage 6d.

Superior of the Convent of Fratte Rosee, he had administered a severe reprimand to a public blasphemer. The man caught him a few days afterwards on his way to visit the sick, and beat him severely, then ran away and hid himself. Father Benvenuto, though badly injured, dragged himself forward, begged pardon for being late, and breathed not a word to anyone about his mishap. The poor sinful wretch could not understand how it was possible to maltreat an Inquisitor and not hear more about it; but no one came to look for him; and when at last he emerged from his hiding-place, no one treated him in any different way from before. The truth was clear to him, and he felt a wholesome shame. Yielding to the impulse of grace, he begged Father Benvenuto's pardon, and made his peace with God.'—*The Month*, January, 1879.

'Father Benvenuto Bambozzi was a very holy and simple Italian priest, who died in 1875, aged 66. His life is peculiarly useful and edifying as devotional reading, on account of the extracts from the holy man's private spiritual writings, and from the pious counsels which he sent to his sister, Mary Scholastica, who was a Benedictine Nun, and died ten years before him. We think that this life of Father Benvenuto will (to enforce the prediction with a pun) be welcomed by religious communities, and will be considered much above the average of such works in interest and utility. . . . The extracts furnished in the appendix from a record kept at Loretto of the charity given nearly two hundred years ago to poor Irish and other pilgrims are very curious indeed.'—*Irish Monthly*, January, 1879.

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The life of Father Benvenuto was reviewed in the form of a Paper in *The Catholic World* of New York (April, 1879), under the title of 'Osimo,' from the graceful pen of M. P. Thompson.



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